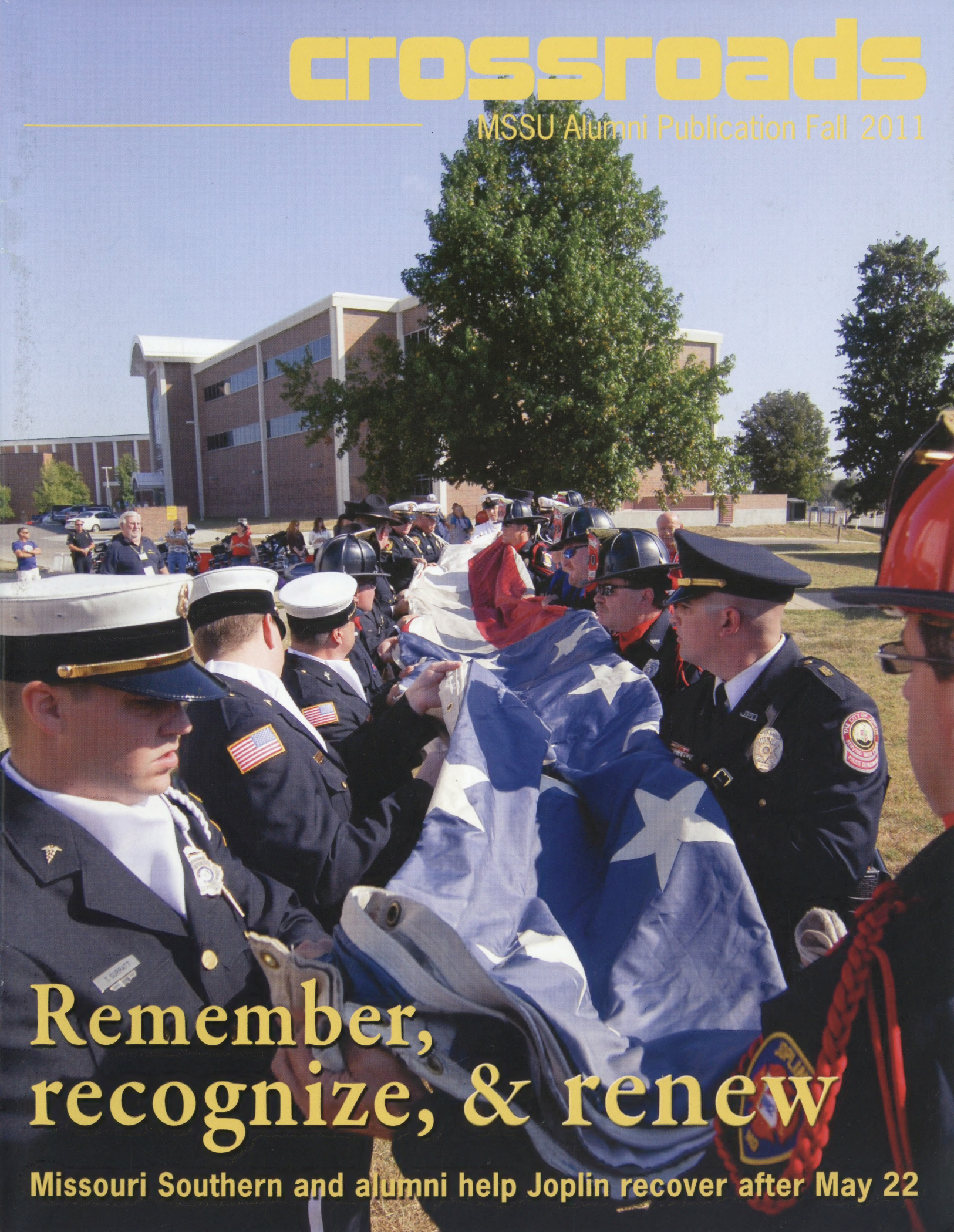


crossroads

MSSU Alumni Publication Fall 2011



Remember,
recognize, & renew

Missouri Southern and alumni help Joplin recover after May 22

crossroads contents



23



13



43



25

fall 2011

HALLMARK OF A UNIVERSITY

The President's Council recognizes relief efforts by the MSSU community 5

Q & A

City Manager Mark Rohr has high hopes for Joplin in the aftermath of disaster 8

POWER TO INFORM

Lynn Onstot, '85, delivers messages from a devastated city to the public 9

TRUE HEROES

Two alumni in the medical field work amid chaos on the night of the storm 11

PROTECTING THE PEOPLE

Fire Chief Mitch Randles, '84, balances a crisis and a family without a home 13

DOWN BUT NOT OUT

Losing their building didn't keep the Station No. 4 firefighters from helping ... 15

Q & A

Governor Nixon helps a city rebuild and recover 17

READY TO SERVE

An alumna receives an unexpected opportunity to help with relief efforts 29

ASSOCIATE EDITOR COLUMNS

crossroads student editors share their stories 31

WILD RIDE

One family discovers a car is no match for an EF-5 tornado 37

A FAMILIAR VOICE

Radio personality provides reassurance to the community 39

LION TALES

Members of the Missouri Southern family share their personal tornado stories 43

THOSE WE LOST

In Remembrance 49
Memoriam 50

DEPARTMENTS

Foundation update 4
School of Business 41

on the cover

Remember, recognize & renew 18

Meeting the needs 19

Resilience and strength 23

Restoring hope with every stitch 25

*Joplin firefighters and police officers unfold the National 9/11 Flag before the memorial service at Missouri Southern on September 11, 2011.
Cover illustration by Andrew Pavlovic, '11; photo by Mike Gullett.*



MSSU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Lee Elliff Pound, '86 / DIRECTOR
Elisa Bryant, '04 / COORDINATOR
Dr. Bruce Speck / MSSU PRESIDENT
Dr. Mark Parsons / MSSU VICE PRESIDENT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MISSOURI SOUTHERN FOUNDATION

Keith Adams, '49; Keith Aubele, '86; Brad Belk; Jean Campbell, '86; Robert Corn, '78; Missy Davidson, '92; Linda Dean, '78; Ted Evans Jr., '85; Bruce Fisher, '80; Jeff Johnson, '82; Paul Kern, '75; Mark Lloyd, '99; Denay Eidson Longman, '95; Shally Lundien, '95 & '03; Will Roderique, '91; Norman Rouse, '75; Jalon Smith, '05; Jeff Wilson, '01 / BOARD OF DIRECTORS

3950 East Newman Road / Joplin, MO 64801 / 417-659-LION / Website located at www.mssu.edu/alumni / Send emails to AlumniAssoc@mssu.edu

MAGAZINE EDITORIAL STAFF

Rhonda Clark, '00 / EDITOR
Joanna Lee, '12; & Kenna Peters, '11 / ASSISTANT EDITORS
Andrew Pavlovic, '11 / ART DIRECTOR
Lakin Adams, '12; Kisa Clark, '11; Jesse Cordova, '11; Amber Heiskell, '12; Ashley Linebarger, '12; Nathan Mills, '12; Sam Pogue, '13; Kristina Rutledge, '12 / ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Willie Brown, '13; Aaron DuRall, '11; Mike Gullett / PHOTOGRAPHY
Rod Anderson, '76; Dr. Beverly Block; Michael Fontana; Major Tammy Spicer, '98 / CONTRIBUTORS

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

crossroads magazine is the official alumni publication of the Missouri Southern State University Alumni Association. The mission is to serve its readers by providing information of interest about the University, its alumni and the Alumni Association and by acting as a channel for Missouri Southern alumni as a "connection for life" with the University.

crossroads magazine is published two times a year by the Missouri Southern State University Alumni Association and the Department of Communication. It is mailed to current MSSU Alumni Association members and friends of the University. A select number of copies are distributed on campus each semester.

crossroads is written and designed by faculty, staff, students and alumni. The views expressed do not represent the student body, faculty, staff, administration or Missouri Southern State University.

Copyright © 2011, **crossroads**. All rights reserved.

Greetings MSSU Alumni!

As I write this on a sunny and beautiful fall afternoon, it seems unreal what we went through just a few months ago on May 22 in Joplin, Missouri.



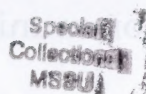
We feel it's really important to provide this special edition to give our alumni and friends insight to what Missouri Southern did to help the community during the days and weeks following the tornado. Stories in this edition will highlight a few of our Missouri Southern family members who lost homes, jobs, loved ones or simply helped others; faculty and staff who immediately assisted our campus in providing much needed shelter facilities; and alumni who came from far and wide to help during those first hours and days of great need.

Joplin is recovering and renewing, and Missouri Southern is proud to be an active and important part of that process. We are so grateful to our family of alumni and friends who have helped to be a part of that, as well.

So please, accept our sincere thanks for all that you have done by supporting our Tornado Emergency Relief Fund, volunteering for the many efforts in our town, and providing time, talents, thoughts and prayers for everyone affected. Missouri Southern is truly the largest family anyone could ever have!

In Lion Pride,

Lee Elliff Pound, '86
 Alumni Director



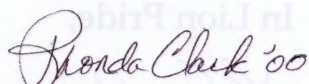
Greetings, alumni and friends!

This fall, our **crossroads** students were given a unique request — come in before the semester begins, receive assignments and put together the fall issue by October 1. Ordinarily, we work a semester in advance. But this issue focuses on events following the May 22 tornado, so most stories and photos were completed in August and September. The students accepted the challenge because they recognized the importance of this historic time.

Some of our students, as you will read, also experienced losses due to the storm. Yet, they were able to perform as professional journalists to put together a magazine that highlights the generosity and heroic deeds of many who came to aid the Joplin area. We hope this issue provides greater insight into the role Missouri Southern employees, students and alumni played in the recovery efforts.

Most people, whether they lost everything or not, have been affected by the devastation of the summer. What has shown through is the resilience and determination of a community to restore itself and move forward. Part of that healing process comes from sharing stories of the people who lived through the storm or pitched in to help. I am proud to say that our **crossroads** students stepped forward to help share the stories of an unforgettable summer.

Warm regards,



Rhonda Clark, '00,
crossroads Editor,
Assistant Professor, Communication

crossroads

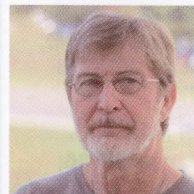
Fall 2011 Staff Members



Amber Heiskell, '12
Graphic Arts



Andrew Pavlovic, '11
Mass Communications



Willie Brown, '13
Mass Communications



Lakin Adams, '12
Public Relations



Kisa Clark, '11
Mass Communications



Jesse Cordova, '11
Mass Communications



Aaron DuRall, '11
Public Relations



Joanna Lee, '12
Speech Comm.



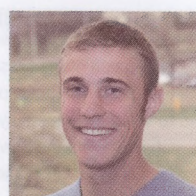
Ashley Linebarger, '12
Public Relations



Nathan Mills, '12
Mass Communications



Kenna Peters, '11
Public Relations



Sam Pogue, '13
Public Relations



Kristina Rutledge, '13
Graphic Arts



Rhonda Clark, '00
Editor, **crossroads**

Fund helps faculty, staff & students to recover

The Missouri Southern Foundation decided its response needed to be urgent and meaningful after May 22. Thus, we created the Tornado Emergency Relief Fund. Criteria for the fund were



that students, faculty and staff were eligible; students had to be enrolled for spring and/or summer; and the applicant had to have experienced a tornado-

related loss. Application forms were available in hard copy at the Foundation office and electronically on Lionet.

In order for the process to be fair, we determined that a committee needed to be assembled to review applications. The committee included Dr. Karen Plucinski, professor of biology and environmental health; Michelle Arwood, business office; Judy Wilmoth, human resources; Carol Stauffer, student; and myself. The committee met several times in June to review applications.

The decision process was difficult. Students in particular experienced greater hardship because most lacked adequate insurance in addition to their already tenu-

Tornado Emergency Relief Fund

If you would like to contribute to the MSSU Tornado Emergency Relief Fund, please send donations to the Missouri Southern Foundation, 3950 E. Newman Road, Joplin, MO 64801. You can also donate online by going to www.mssu.edu/giving.

All funds go directly to Missouri Southern people in need — faculty, staff and students. No administrative or other costs are deducted, and all donations stay local.

ous financial position. People experienced various kinds of losses, everything from housing to cars to jobs to medication to computers for study.

The committee decided the best way to proceed with the initial distribution of funds was to provide a set amount as a grant to each individual deemed eligible.

Through this process, the Foundation distributed more than \$36,000 to more

than 160 individuals at the end of June. As of September 2, we had raised more than \$52,000. A second distribution of funds occurred before the end of September, with nearly \$5,000 going to more than 20 additional students impacted by the tornado.

The gratitude expressed by grant recipients has been most heartening. One wrote, "I want to express my gratitude for your generous financial gift to me after losing my home (and) car ... It means a great deal to me that you would go to the time and trouble to help your MSSU family."

The committee continues to meet to determine future distribution of funds. Donations to the fund continue to arrive through the mail and on the Foundation's giving page on the MSSU website, from as far away as Japan. Events and drives, large and small, are planned throughout the fall to increase the amount of resources available for grants.

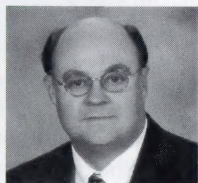
We know not all of the need has been answered, but we hope that by continuing to assist in a small way, we are helping tornado victims move just a little further down the road to recovery.

— Michael Fontana, Development Officer for Annual and Scholarship Giving

Former Board of Governors chair inspires with words of support

Editor's note: This is an excerpt by Rod Anderson, '76, former chair of the Board of Governors, on June 16, the first board meeting after the disaster that struck Joplin.

This board meeting has a very different feel because of 5/22. All has changed — this institution has added a monumental position of community responsibility and service to its 75th historical story.



As this is my last meeting as chair, I want to offer heartfelt condolences to Dr. José Alvarez's family and friends and all those who have lost family, friends or neighbors and to all of Southern's faculty, staff and

students for their tremendous losses.

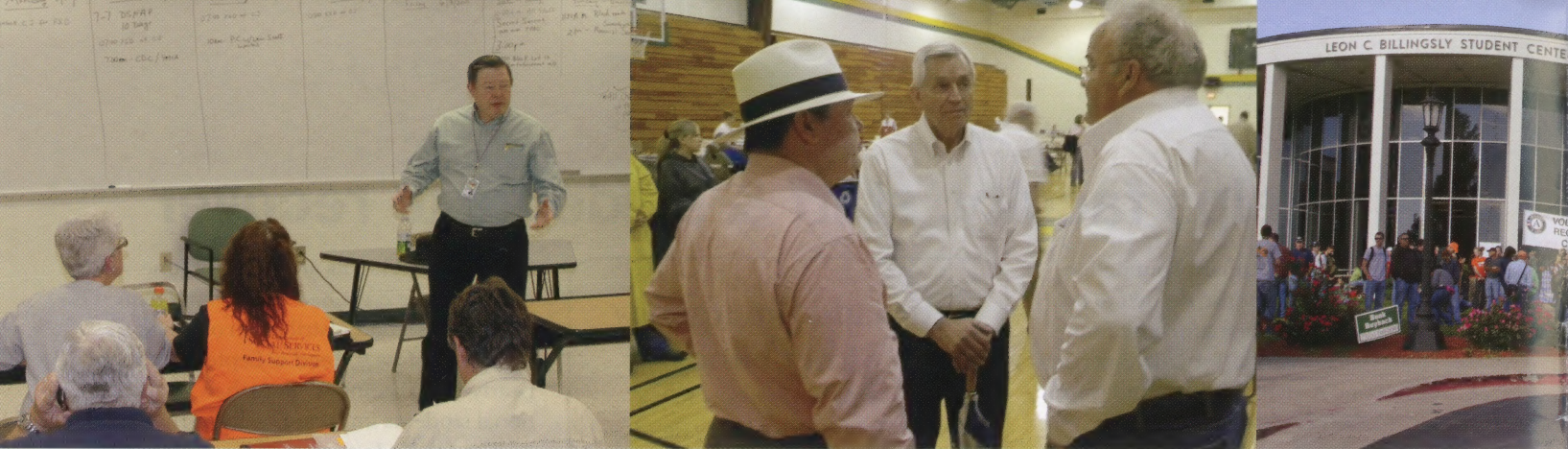
I want to thank all those helpers and supporters of Joplin, near and far, identified and anonymous. I can't comprehend what it is like searching for life mementos, pictures and treasures through your own rubble. Bless the people of Joplin for their fortitude and strength in the aftermath, showing what a strong community we have. Bless all those at MSSU working for this community in its time of need.

For me, it has been moving listening to my fellow board members' losses and contributions. For all those in harm's way — Dwight Douglas, our "medical minuteman" — was in the right place at the right time. As Governor Buchanan drove me around town, I saw her pain and anguish as she said, "Look what

it did to our city and people." I understood as I had deep loss to our family farm in the 2003 Pierce City tornado.

Governor Jones gave a story of relief as his 94-year-old mother survived in her bathtub as her home was no more. Governors McGinty and Perry had offices and businesses torn apart. Governor Walters described his mission of feeding the victims and helpers, and Governor Ewing from Nevada was one of the first to grow our MSSU relief funds.

We are back at work to help and educate, with Governors serving at their upmost, no matter what appointment status one may have. Everyone at this table, I assure you, is dedicated to the success and service of Missouri Southern, and I am proud to be one.



Left, University President Bruce Speck conducts an organizational meeting with staff during the week of May 22. Center, Speck and Vice President for Academic Affairs AJ Anglin visit with U.S. Rep. Billy Long (R-Mo.). Right, Volunteers gather outside of Billingsly Student Center on May 24.

Service: The hallmark of a university

On May 22 at 5:41 p.m., an EF-5 tornado struck Joplin, Missouri, wreaking havoc over a business and residential area three-quarters of a mile wide and 14 miles long in the center of the city and beyond. Thankfully, Missouri Southern State University was untouched and became an integral part of the relief effort that immediately began.

Our MSSU family — students, staff, faculty — responded to the extraordinary circumstances by working with local, state and federal agencies to provide desperately needed services. Southern partnered with government and private agencies alike to meet the needs of area residents in the aftermath of this historical storm.

We are particularly proud of our MSSU family and the way it responded to help those in need. We believe the heart of a university is service to others and that was demonstrated time and time again in the hours, days and weeks that followed the tornado.

Countless people went above and beyond the call of duty, and while we call these people heroes, they do not. Rather, they consider themselves ordinary folks who saw a multitude of human needs and responded in a selfless approach — ordinary service in a time of extraordinary circumstances. We admire them for that attitude.

MSSU became a focal point after the storm because it had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Greater

Ozarks Regional Chapter of the American Red Cross establishing the university as a disaster shelter just three weeks before the tornado touched down. Red Cross officials were at the university within hours and kicked into action their plan to provide cots, blankets and other aid to tornado survivors. Young Gymnasium and Leggett & Platt Athletic Center provided a place to meet the immediate needs of citizens brutalized by the tornado. People flooded in, many dazed by the abrupt change in their lives, all seeking comfort, assurance and help. At one point, almost 500 individuals were housed at the shelter.

With such a short period of time between signing the MOU and the disaster, the customary time used to develop a detailed plan about that partnership was shortened. Those logistical challenges were intensified by the extent of the devastation. More than 8,000 homes and 500 businesses were destroyed, including schools and churches. Approximately 16,000 vehicles were mangled or made unusable. One of the two primary hospitals was destroyed as well as many dental and medical offices. And, 161 people died from injuries received that night. Communication was difficult at best. Two power stations had been lost and cell phones functioned intermittently because towers were damaged. During the first two weeks, managing a fragmented and constantly shifting communication flow was a challenge.

Despite these challenges, it was not sur-

prising to us that the MSSU family jumped to action without prompting. For example, Dean of Arts & Sciences Richard Miller was at the shelter immediately after it opened, helping set up cots. It wasn't until the next day that we learned he had lost his house in the tornado, stepping out of the only room that remained after the whirlwind passed. He and his wife, Cindi, a nurse, made their way to the university to help others.

The athletic complex was the center of the immediate efforts to provide solace, and many university hands ensured people's needs were met. The crush of people, some with critical and special needs, taxed the facilities to the point that our custodians, working with little or no sleep, hauled water from the indoor swimming pool to help flush toilets because the water system in Joplin had been compromised. A boil water order was also in effect.

The 24-hour operation of the athletic facilities required constant monitoring by our department of public safety, physical plant director, athletic facility manager, and public safety officer. Pulling double or triple shifts, employees and students treated those from outside the campus as family, providing for them the comfort and assistance that was vital for their well-being in the face of an event that left many traumatized.

People from other agencies pulled us aside and told us how helpful MSSU family members were in solving problems, how cheerful, never passing the buck, never say-



Center, Athletic Director Jared Bruggeman and Vice President for Student Services Darren Fullerton, '88, discuss details related to the Red Cross shelter. Right, a medical professional checks her cell phone in Leggett & Platt Athletic Center, where the shelter was set up for Joplin area residents.

Ordinary people, extraordinary circumstances and public service define the Missouri Southern State University family.

ing go somewhere else for an answer. This can-do approach to helping others amazed those unfamiliar with our campus and confirmed to us, as insiders, that service really is a hallmark of the university's commitment to the community.

Many individuals served for long stretches in difficult circumstances, but so many others volunteered to help. The shelter required all kinds of attention, and those at MSSU who could put their work on hold to volunteer did so.

Our facilities served multiple functions: a shelter for hundreds of people (including individuals who had pets) where three meals a day were provided, a

"Pulling double or triple shifts, employees and students treated those from outside the campus as family, providing for them the comfort and assistance that was vital for their well-being in the face of an event that left many traumatized."

day care center, counseling, an aid station, safe-and-well registration, phone and computer banks, among other functions.

A crush of local, national and international news coverage hit the area. Our media relations department assisted Red Cross officials in managing media requests for interviews with Red Cross shelter residents. Personnel from the MSSU Foundation, Alumni Association, University Relations and Marketing, Department of Communications, as well as alumni and volunteers, pitched in to respond to media requests.

During the crisis, we found that keeping in the flow of communication with the Emergency Operations Center in Joplin was

essential. Director of University Relations and Marketing Rod Surber met each day at 6 a.m. in the EOC with representatives from emergency response agencies involved in the crisis to glean the latest. Our athletic facilities became a place for administrative meetings, where fragile communication was pieced together and actions coordinated between university leadership and emergency response personnel.

Many people coming to the shelter needed medical attention. Dean of Technol-

ogy Tia Strait arrived on campus within hours and mobilized the Health Sciences Building to provide medical care. Since the shelter and Health Sciences Building are only 50 yards apart, citizens who had medical needs were escorted to the facility, which served as a 28-bed hospital. MSSU health care faculty, staff and students worked side-by-side with other professionals — physicians, pharmacists, nurses — to treat physical and emotional needs. Again, because of the continuous flow of acute trauma, we found MSSU faculty and staff sleeping on cots to catch a few winks before resuming volunteer duties.

AmeriCorps was also quick to respond,

and starting Sunday evening until the early hours of Monday morning, our employees worked at the Beimdiek Recreation Center, where AmeriCorps established a processing center to register and deploy volunteers. A recent graduate and member of the Student Senate worked through the night until sufficient AmeriCorps personnel were in place. By Monday morning, our parking lots and streets around the center filled with thousands of volunteers, ready and eager to help. That magnitude of volunteers

continued throughout the week.

At one point, Director of IT Al Stadler had been running on adrenalin during a 36-hour stint. His department was the one that

could command the resources to get the job done. The entire IT department labored above and beyond to provide essential communication support, especially during a time when the communication network in Joplin was crippled.

Hotels quickly filled in Joplin, and MSSU remained the only option for police, fire and search and rescue teams that came to help. Our 700-bed residence halls were filled to capacity during the first three weeks of the disaster, and because we had graduated our seniors the day before the storm hit and we were not in session, we had limited staff in the residence halls. Residence Assistants who had just finished



Left, Fullerton, '88, speaks at the campus memorial service on August 28 in Taylor Auditorium. Center, Vice President for Business Affairs Rob Yust, '80, (right) discusses the set up of Leggett & Platt for the shelter. Right, former Vice President for Development Mark Parsons and Stephen Smith, '77, news bureau manager, assist Dean of Arts and Sciences Richard Miller, who lost his home on May 22. — Photos by Mike Gullett and Lee & Wyrsh

their semester's duties were asked to help with the influx of first responders to the residence halls. Without pay or the hope of pay, those RAs worked tirelessly, processing emergency personnel in and out of the residence halls.

Many other facilities were used, and university family members pitched in to help as the campus became busier during the weeks after the disaster. Corley Auditorium, which seats about 400, was used for events, including Missouri Governor Jay Nixon's initial meeting to present a plan for directing the recovery efforts in Joplin. Our media staff met the needs of the Governor's Office and other state offices that conducted press conferences on recovery issues, including the Missouri Department of Public Safety's efforts in reducing the unaccounted-for-persons list from more than 1,500 to zero.

Another component of the university's service to the community was hosting a memorial service in Taylor Auditorium. Anticipating an overflow crowd, we established four live-feed locations on campus to accommodate the people — in excess of 7,000 — who turned out to hear President Obama and Governor Nixon deliver inspirational messages. We were humbled and grateful to provide a place to memorialize our fellow citizens.

But our people did not limit their participation in the relief effort to the campus. Players and coaches from the football and women's basketball teams were out clearing debris, as were many of our faculty, staff and students. Our students willingly and eagerly logged thousands of hours of service since the May 22 tornado. They

were doing whatever was needed to help victims find a sense of balance as they lived amid the ruins that once were their homes and businesses.

While all this was happening to help the community, university staff also began the important task of reaching out to students, faculty and staff to determine who had suffered losses due to the tornado. Departments within the university met to create a campus assistance call center, a student assistance form, and an employee assistance form to enable the university to collect information about members of the

"Our people served with distinction even though they persist in considering themselves ordinary citizens who were pressed into service by their own sense of compassion and duty during a time of crisis."

MSSU family. Although we had kept a record of needs as we found out about them, the formal process of soliciting information confirmed to us that, sadly, MSSU family members had not been unscathed by the devastation.

Faculty member Dr. José Alvarez; Don Lansaw, husband of staff member Bethany Lansaw; and student Abraham Khoury died from tornado-related injuries. More than 130 university family members lost homes, and a score of others sustained significant damage to their dwellings.

Within 24 hours, the Missouri Southern Foundation established a Tornado Emergency Relief Fund to assist these individuals with immediate needs. A representative committee of students, staff and faculty has distributed the majority of those funds and continues to evaluate applications for

funding so these resources can be used wisely to alleviate some of our people's suffering.

We knew members of the MSSU family would need to deal with their own personal issues, so we authorized up to 120 additional hours of paid leave for faculty and staff who experienced personal injury or whose home was either destroyed or damaged. All employees were given an additional 80 hours of paid time to volunteer in disaster-related activities to assist friends, family or community. The additional hours of paid leave and paid time for volunteer service extends until the end of the 2012 fiscal year. In addition, faculty and staff invited some university families who lost homes to move into their homes.

We have only touched upon a few of the stories of ordinary people serving their community during extraordinary circumstances. Volumes could be written — and probably should be written — about individual acts of kindness, fortitude, poise under pressure, and incredible self-sacrifice that were witnessed throughout campus in the weeks after one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history.

Our people served with distinction, even though they persist in considering themselves ordinary citizens who were pressed into service by their own sense of compassion and duty during a time of crisis.

— By Missouri Southern President's Council

The MSSU President's Council is led by Dr. Bruce W. Speck and includes Dr. AJ Anglin, Jared Bruggeman, Darren Fullerton, '88, Dr. Mark Parsons, and Rob Yust, '80.

Q&A

Joplin City Manager Mark Rohr discusses rebuilding opportunities for the city and believes a stronger and more cohesive community will result from the storm.

Q: What do you see as Missouri Southern State University's role in the Joplin community after May 22 and in the months of recovery to come?

A: MSSU played a key role in the city's post-recovery efforts in many ways, but primarily as a willing partner in providing locations for many important meetings, events and addressing other needs.

Q: Many think this is a time for Joplin to come back bigger and stronger. What are some future opportunities for the city?

A: We have an opportunity to rebuild back nearly one-third of our city. There are many great ideas circulating on how to do that. I also think we should find ways to build on the positive brand recognition elicited by Joplin's name recognition as a result of how we have handled the response to the storm. I expect the Citizen Advisory Recovery Team process will produce many additional ideas to improve our town.

Q: How does the city plan to address housing and entertainment needs for the growing number of college-age residents in Joplin?

A: We constantly try to develop ideas to integrate the college with the city. The trolley and the developing trail system are examples of this. We are also trying to create more amenities in Joplin to enable more things to do for the residents, 270,000 daily visitors, college students and the 2 million people coming to the casino every year.

Q: What new zoning plans are being developed for Joplin and how will they be implemented?

A: Any new ideas with respect to this will likely come from the Citizens Advisory Recovery Team process and the City Council's decisions with respect to



Joplin City Manager Mark Rohr talks with Joplin Public Information Officer Lynn Onstot, '85, at a citywide information meeting on August 22 at College Heights Christian Church, just east of Missouri Southern State University. — Photo by Willie Brown, '13

these recommendations.

Q: As the city rebuilds, what steps are taking place to ensure companies and organizations can minimize the damage from future severe storms?

A: Council has passed the first reading of building code adjustments. A recently approved tree ordinance would also help us deal with storms in the future. I anticipate ideas from the Citizens Advisory Recovery Team process will be directed at minimizing damage as well.

Q: With the destruction of parks and other recreation areas, how will these areas be replaced and expanded?

A: Plans are being developed as we speak. We will use insurance proceeds, donations and FEMA funds.

Q: How will the downtown area and revitalization project benefit from the rebuilding process?

A: That will be interesting to see. There have been suggestions made with respect to the southerly expansion of downtown, given some of the open space now available.

Q: Where do you see Joplin on May 22, 2012?

A: Deep in the midst of the rebuilding process and a stronger, more cohesive city for what we have experienced. As I have said before, the storm will be the defining moment in our lives. It has forever changed us. We have been drawn together by surviving this shared experience.

— Sam Pogue, '13

"... the storm will be the defining moment in our lives. It has forever changed us."

Power to INFORM

PIO draws on her education and experience to deliver messages to the citizens of Joplin.

In the days following the tornado, a familiar voice was heard on the local radio station. For many, the constant news coverage on KZRG was the only information available, since power and cable TV were out to thousands.

"That's Lynn Onstot with the city of Joplin," the radio personality said, as the voice directed media in the moments before a live press conference.

"Yes it is, and she's been doing a great job," the co-personality said.

Onstot, '85, has held her position as public information officer with the city of Joplin since 2003, but nothing prepared her for the onslaught of media attention after May 22. She received a call from Keith Stammer, emergency management director, almost immediately after the tornado hit, requesting her to come to the emergency operations center. What she found was a swirl of activity, and calls from national news organizations, like CNN and ABC, were already coming in.

"We just knew it was going to be horrendous," said Onstot about that first press conference, which took place at 5:30 a.m. the day after the storm hit. "I had no idea how many media were going to be on site. They basically lined both sides of the street from Maiden Lane to past Pitcher on 26th Street, and that was just satellite trucks."

Southwest Missouri volunteers with public information experience came to her aid for 12 days, when more than 200 local, regional, national and international media outlets arrived to report on the now historic storm. Finding a place for the many news conferences came down

to logistics. The site on what was left of Cunningham Park across the street from St. John's Regional Medical Center became the staging area for many events in the weeks that followed.

Since Onstot lives north of Joplin, seeing the massive devastation came later, but she understood the seriousness of the situation as the number of dead continued to increase on the board in the EOC. Like others, Onstot was surprised the number who died was less than 200, given the magnitude of the storm. She credits weather warnings and the sounding of two sirens as helping people to take cover.

"I think there are angels among us; I truly believe that," she said. "The stories

that I have heard, the good Lord was looking out for Joplin that night. Even though we did lose some lives, and some very tragic stories, we were very lucky. We have good people in good leadership roles, not just with the city, but other organizations, and everybody stepped up."

One week after, at 5:41 p.m. on May 29, a moment of silence at Cunningham Park to commemorate the storm attracted some 2,500 people.

"It was a moment we needed to kind of take a breath and realize what we had just been through and know that we can continue," Onstot said. "At that point in time, I was overwhelmed with grief."

But, as she looked out over the sea of faces of hope, all ready to push on to



Lynn Onstot, '85, talks to Daniel Overturf, a professor of cinema and photography from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, who was in the area to document the storm. — Photos by Willie Brown, '13

help the city rebuild, Onstot was inspired.

"I'm proud of the resiliency of our citizens, at how they rallied together along with the many volunteers, to clean up the city, but we have a long ways to go," she said.

Onstot's family did not miss the storm unscathed. Her husband's parents lost their home at 24th Street and Illinois Avenue, and a sister-in-law lost her house on 26th Street. It would be almost a month before Onstot would have a chance to see the damage.

"The first thing I saw was the wreath I made my in-laws when Steve and I first got married," Onstot said. "We were newlyweds and didn't have a lot of money, and I made them this little puffy wreath, and there it lay on the ground. I have it in my car now. I just picked it up and cried."

She is especially proud of her family and how they helped after the storm, and, she never leaves the house without kissing them goodbye. She also never leaves the office without telling her co-workers, "Thanks."

"I have met a lot of new people, and there is a lot of goodness out there — a lot of people who want to help others," Onstot said. "I think it's that gift of kindness from one to another that will get us through this."

— Rhonda Clark, '00

LYNN ONSTOT, '85

Professional

City of Joplin, 2003-present
Precious Moments, 1999-03
St. John's, 1994-99
Multiple Sclerosis Society, 1992-93
Freeman Health System, 1986-92

Education

Bachelor of Arts. Missouri Southern
State University, public
communications, 1985

Personal

Hometown: Warrenton, Missouri
Husband: Steve
Daughters: Sarah, 18, & Monica, 12



Two alumni,
employees
of St. John's
and Freeman,
recall a night
they will
never forget.

True heroes



Most people from southwest Missouri know what it's like to be in a thunderstorm and under a tornado warning. Kathy Cowley, of Carl Junction, and Dr. Nathan Box, of Joplin, are two such people. However, both had never seen anything like they did the night of May 22. As medical professionals, they worked in the middle of the chaos.

Cowley, a 1995 graduate of the Missouri Southern nursing program, is the manager of St. John's Regional Medical Center's maternity unit and was driving home when the storm rolled in. Her family took cover in their basement. Afterward, Cowley received a message on her cell phone from her shift manager, Nancy Miller, who was at the obstetrics wing on the eighth floor of St. John's.

She was shouting, "Kathy, oh my God, oh my God, we've been hit; the tornado hit us. We're trying to get all the moms and babies safe. We've got to get out."

"Usually, I'm pretty cool, calm and collected, but it just brought me to my knees and tears," said Cowley.

She and her husband jumped into their van and drove toward the hospital.

That same day, Box, a 2001 Southern honors biology graduate and an ear nose and throat and facial trauma specialist for Freeman Health System, was with his 5-year-old son at home on West 26th Street near Schifferdecker Avenue. They spent the afternoon jumping on a trampoline before the clouds rolled in. The Boxes went inside when the sirens went off. They took cover in the bathtub and waited as the storm passed through the backyard, taking the trampoline with it.

Box called his wife, who was in Kansas at the time, to tell her they were OK and for her to come home.

Box ran toward the hospital, where a police officer offered to take Box and an emergency room physician to Memorial Hall, where the main triage center was being set up.

Meanwhile, Cowley had worked her way to 26th Street, near St. Paul's United Methodist Church, along with several other St. John's employees, many of whom had lost everything themselves. Police stopped the group from proceeding east toward the hospital at Maiden Lane, so they started a

small triage at St. Paul's.

"It was so emotional. I guess I felt like a Marine or something," Cowley said. "You don't leave anyone behind, and I just needed to know that my staff was OK, because all I had was that first phone call. I was just so frustrated I couldn't get there that night. Oh my goodness, I never cried so much in one night in my life."

She later was told everyone had been evacuated from the hospital, and found out later that her staff on duty had done an impeccable job moving all of the patients to safety.

"It was an interesting ride for them, but they did it. They did amazing. I am just so proud of them and so proud that everyone was safe," Cowley said.

At the Memorial Hall triage, Box was limited in what he could do. He sutured wounds, sent one boy with multiple facial fractures for help at an out-of-town hospital, kept patients warm, sat with patients, held IV poles, and pronounced some deaths.

"That night, we were just in shock of the whole thing, and that's what was so bad. Even being a physician, you only can do what you can do, and we really didn't have the resources," said Box. "What the great thing was, people actually waited. If someone was worse off than another person, they would let the other person go ahead."

Box worked through the night, and reported to Freeman the next day.

He also took some time to borrow a dump truck and help his neighbors haul loads of brush and debris.

Box and his staff are staying extremely busy keeping up with new demands after St. John's was replaced with a temporary

field hospital. Freeman West is in the process of opening more floors to help with the increased patient volume.

Box said other aspects are improving, too.

"There for the next few weeks, it was hard to sleep at night. You hear those screams, and I definitely had anxiety. Now, my son is definitely afraid of storms, but it's gotten much better," he said.

Cowley has some obstetrics staff at the temporary hospital just in case they are needed.

In spring 2012, the field hospital will be replaced by a 120-bed component hospital being built

and shipped in from California, which will have beds and a nursery dedicated to obstetrics.


"We're all missing our patients very badly," Cowley said. "We want to deliver, and we've had patients call us and say they are so sad they won't get to deliver with us, but we'll be back better and bigger."

Cowley and other employees are working on designs with architects for the new hospital, to be built near South Main Street and Interstate 44 in Joplin, set for completion in 2014.

"I was there when we built the floor that was on the eighth floor in 2001. I was also brought in in 1995 with the original eight people that got the floor opened the first time, so we're just doing it again," said Cowley.

— Kisa Clark, '11

In photo on facing page, Kathy Cowley, '95, and Dr. Nathan Box, '01, stand outside of Memorial Hall, where a triage station was set up the night of May 22. — Photo by Willie Brown, '13



Joplin Fire Chief Mitch Randles, '84, and members of the fire department hold the National 9/11 Flag at a memorial service on September 11, 2011. St. John's Regional Medical Center, destroyed by the May 22 tornado, is in the background.

— Photo by Rhonda Clark, '00

Safe haven

Joplin's fire chief faced the daunting task to coordinate rescue efforts while his family searched for a place to call home.

As the family prepared to leave the Joplin High School graduation ceremony and head for home, a phone call came at an opportune time. Mitch Randles made an executive decision as they approached the intersection at Seventh Street and Duquesne Road.

"You're going to have to go to work with me," he told his family, and they sped to Fire Station No. 1 in downtown Joplin, Missouri.

Randles, '84, was named Joplin's fire chief in October 2010, and his family was used to having to ride along when duty called. Something in the urgency of the phone call from the emergency manager cued him this storm may have serious implications for the area. He knew the fire department's services would be needed. The quick turn west also kept his family out of harm's way, as the evening later revealed that the Randles' Duquesne home was destroyed by the May 22 tornado.

The Joplin Fire Department would also count losses that night, as it lost two fire stations and four of its 80 employees would lose homes. Randles teamed up with Joplin City Manager Mark Rohr to assess the area.

"It was just overwhelming the amount of damage, amount of destruction, that we were seeing and the number of buildings and facilities that had not only been damaged, but literally obliterated," Randles said. "As we continued on, it was just block, after block, after block, and we were getting this vision of the daunting task in front of us."

They continued to survey the damage, stopping to help people who were trapped in homes and churches until rescue crews arrived. As night fell, a Tulsa medical helicopter took the fire chief and city manager on an aerial assessment of the area. The amount of destruction became more evident; the emergency lights glowing below signaled just how many individuals were trapped or needing help.

For three days, the Randles family lived at the EOC and helped out where they could, getting food for emergency workers or running errands. The Randles had



Mitch Randles, '84, and his wife, Susan, '90, relied on family, friends and each other to help the community and their family put the pieces back together after the May 22 tornado struck Joplin, Missouri. — Photo by Willie Brown, '13

lived in their Duquesne home for 15 years, and the hardest part for his wife, Susan Randles, '90, was keeping the family going without the help of her husband.

It was Tuesday before Susan ventured to what was left of their home, accompanied by her son and another firefighter's wife.

"I was going through all of the different emotions of where we were at," said Susan, who started her 13th year teaching preschool at Martin Luther School in Joplin. "Mitch was tied up at work, and I was trying to stay strong for the family. I didn't want the kids to feel anymore frustration than they had to and was trying to keep things as normal as possible."

In the meantime, her husband coordinated the search and rescue efforts from within the city and recruited aid from outside the area. Help did arrive, as some 400-500 departments from across the nation assisted in those first few days.

"The outpouring of support and assis-

tance was just fantastic," he said.

The coordinated efforts are credited with preventing the loss of more lives.

In the days since May 22, some emergency workers have asked Randles if he pulled out his emergency plan.

"I don't think humans can visualize that something like this can happen," he said.

"Quite honestly, if someone had written this up and handed it to me and said, 'Here, I want you to make a plan for this,' I'd have said this will never happen. This is just so farfetched that it would wipe out a hospital, two fire stations, and cut a city in half, destroy 7,000 to 8,000 structures — no one would believe that."

Some in the community have used the term hero to describe their fire chief. His wife expanded on that point.

"He would argue against that," Susan said. "He'd say he's only doing his job. Of course, it's a much bigger job than it's ever been before. It's about helping others, and I see all of our public servants as heroes."

Life is returning to that normalcy Susan hoped for her family. They recently purchased a home in south Joplin, opting to forego rebuilding in Duquesne. They credit their church family at Immanuel Lutheran Church for helping them through the tough times.

"We have faith that things will get better and that God will provide a path for us, that this is some part of a plan," said Randles.

"And for me, I have a community and a department that's looking to me to push them forward and get them back to normal. That need to provide that service and to make people feel protected has kept me going and kept my department going."

And, that determination can be seen in Joplin.

"So many people have tried to get our story," Susan Randles said. "Our story, sadly, is not a unique story. It's our community's story. Our community has pulled together. It's a sad situation, but the miracles that have come out of this have been remarkable."

— Rhonda Clark, '00

Down but not out



Capt. John Cory (left), driver-engineer Jeff Turner, and firefighters Kyle Howard, '07, and Eric Strasser stand on the steps to the temporary home for Joplin Fire Station No. 4 on East 15th Street.

— Photo by Willie Brown, '13

Joplin firefighters survive loss of their station and experience help from the community in days after devastation.

A modular building and temporary engine bay mark Fire Station No. 4 on east 15th Street in Joplin, Missouri, stark reminders of a harrowing night.

After the EF-5 tornado swept past, Capt. John Cory radioed his battalion chief to tell him that Station No. 4 had been hit, all personnel were accounted for and OK, and Station No. 4 was out of service.

The Joplin Fire Department saw two of its stations crushed the evening of May 22 and four emergency vehicles destroyed. But for the firefighters at those stations, surviving the storm was the beginning of a long recovery effort.

The forecast called for storms on May 22. Cory, driver-engineer Jeff Turner, and firefighters Kyle Howard and Eric Strasser spent a calm afternoon watching TV at Station No. 4. The first round of sirens went off about 5:15 p.m., and the firefighters went outside to check the clouds.

The dark sky gave the first indication of the storm's power. A second round of sirens went off. The scanner rasped a warning from the battalion chief. Station No. 2, west of town on Maiden Lane just north of St. John's Regional Medical Center, checked in. It took a hit from the tornado, the building crumpled, and power was gone. Firefighters at Station No. 4 soon spotted debris blowing down 15th Street.

"We just got the bay doors shut, and it came through," said Turner, who taught firefighter courses at Missouri Southern from 2002-04. "You could hear the wind hit the building, a lot of pressure and everything."

Howard heard someone beating on the front door. Two cars had pulled in front of the station just as the storm hit, with five people seeking shelter. Firefighters herded them to an interior room.

Turner went to the back door and watched debris fall; the storm had pulled the rear door shut. The windows blew in, and everyone took cover. They could see through to the bay area as the door swung wildly in the wind. The storm picked up the engine and slammed it to the ground, and the concrete block walls of the bay collapsed on top of it. Their two trucks were buried and useless.

"We had a building around us, what was left of it," Turner said. "The roof was gone and everything. We could see daylight through the top."

They crawled into the collapsed bay and pulled equipment from the engine and gear from the cab. They suited up, grabbed radios and loaded tools into the back of Cory's storm-damaged pickup. Dodging power lines and traffic, they headed toward 20th Street and Connecticut Avenue.

Homes, churches, strip malls and apartment complexes had filled the neighborhood, but they scarcely recognized the once bustling intersection.

"It all was just completely gone," Turner said. "That's the worst of it."

Strasser started treating the walking wounded. Ambulances began to arrive, and the search and rescue operation began. Firefighters dug through rubble for survivors, even when that meant layers and layers of sheetrock and brick or dismantling concrete walls.

"That night, so many people came up and asked what do we need," said Howard, who received his firefighter and EMT certification from Missouri Southern in 2007. "They began clearing the roads. People came in and cooked food, whatever we needed throughout the week."

Howard had added anxiety that night. His home was on 18th Street, directly in the tornado's path, and his wife and three of their four sons were home alone. After about 90 minutes of search and rescue, another station captain took Howard to find his family. His wife's leg was injured after a board struck her as she shielded her boys. Howard helped her to a triage station, sent his boys to a friend's house and went back to work. He had lost his home, but his family was safe.

The recovery task was overwhelming at first. Station No. 4's district stretches from Seventh to 26th streets, west to Kentucky Avenue, and east to the city limits.

"(The tornado) went down through the heart of it," Turner said.

Volunteers arrived throughout the night, and by early morning, Missouri Task Force One had joined the search. They waded through piles of debris listening for calls for help or movement that might lead them to survivors. The search continued for nearly four days, with firefighters catching an hour's worth of sleep here or there.

Three weeks after the storm, the fire station lot was cleared. A travel trailer became Station No. 4, helping to keep a presence in what was left of the neighborhood. By July 3, the rented trailer was gone, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had installed the modular building and temporary engine bay, which housed a loaner truck from Pierce Manufacturing.

To say things have changed is an understatement. For Howard, the loss of two home bases was hard. Firefighters from other departments helped clean out his house so Howard could work. He and his family stayed with friends and hoped to build a house on some land. His wife was a unit secretary at St. John's, which was destroyed as well.

"It was devastating, but it's a chance for Joplin to start over," Howard said. "We can look and see what it could be. Most cities don't get that chance."

Good news came for the Howards in October, when their family was selected to receive one of the seven homes built

by ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." The homes were completed the last week of October, and the show will air in January.

For Strasser, whose wife and infant son were safely out of the storm's path, he has a new awareness.

"I pay attention to weather sirens a lot more now," said Strasser, who came to Joplin from St. Louis in 2009, two years after receiving his certification. "It made me a lot more thankful for what I have and the safety of my family."

Turner, a 19-year veteran firefighter originally from western Kansas, has seen his share of storms, but this was by far the worst. The firefighters expressed gratitude for the multiple agencies and the area's citizens who came to help.

"All we have seen is generosity, over and over again," Howard said.

The firefighters noted that Midwest fortitude reinforces a can-do attitude

"The people of Joplin have shown they are a strong and faithful people," Strasser said. "If you work hard, you can get the job done."

— Amye Buckley, '09

"We had a building around us, what was left of it. The roof was gone and everything. We could see daylight through the top."

by ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." The homes were completed the last week of October, and the show will air in January.

Q&A:

Missouri Governor Nixon gave an inspirational message to Southern's graduates on May 21, only to return two days later to comfort Joplin, a devastated city in need.

Q: When did you first hear about the tornado?

A: We had been monitoring that weather system that day, so certainly I knew that there was a possibility of severe weather. I was in Jefferson City that early evening when I was notified by one of my senior staff that a tornado had just hit Joplin. This was only a few minutes after it happened, and while there wasn't a great deal of information, I knew we had a very serious situation.

We immediately dispatched the Missouri State Highway Patrol and the Missouri National Guard to Joplin. I headed down to Joplin on Monday morning, and the full scope of the destruction became more apparent. Certainly, those were sights I won't ever forget.

Q: Do you think MSSU was used well as a resource following the tornado?

A: Missouri Southern was a tremendous and invaluable resource, and one can't overstate both the preparedness and responsiveness of the university and its faculty and staff. This is even more impressive because the MSSU family had also suffered losses in this disaster, and the people there stepped forward without hesitation to help at the same time the storm had greatly impacted them.

Only a few weeks before the tornado, MSSU had entered into an agreement with the Red Cross to serve as a shelter during times of disaster, and having those procedures in place was a great aid to the community. In the immediate aftermath, the university housed members of my staff, of the Highway Patrol, the Guard, and other responders, and served as the volunteer nerve center for AmeriCorps. We could not have asked for greater hospitality during this time of need.

Q: What are some of your thoughts on the Memorial Service held at MSSU a week after the tornado with President Obama?

A: Everyone at Missouri Southern did an outstanding job in hosting the memo-



Top, Governor Nixon speaks May 26 at a Community Response Meeting held in Taylor Auditorium. Above left, Nixon and First Lady Georganne Nixon talk with first responders at St. John's Regional Medical Center on May 23. Above right, Joplin Teachers receive a hero's welcome as they arrive for a meeting on August 15 at MSSU. The governor addressed the teachers as they prepared to begin the new year in a changed environment. — Courtesy, official State of Missouri photos

rial service that following Sunday. The service truly embodied the spirit of Joplin — how this great city and region may have taken a tremendous blow, but that the people here were going to rebuild. You really saw that spirit that day, and a nationwide TV audience saw and heard it, too.

Q: What do you see for the future of Joplin?

A: Since the very first day, I've said the same message: The state of Missouri was going to be here from the start, and

we would see this through, no matter how long it would take. Even before the tornado, Joplin was a vibrant community — growing in population, an unemployment rate lower than the statewide rate, and two outstanding hospitals that served a region of several hundred thousand.

Rebuilding Joplin is not just about returning things to the way they were on May 21. It is about building a city that will continue to grow, and which leads our state forward.

— Kisa Clark, '11

Recognize, remember, renew

Southern moves toward healing with memorial service.

By the time Whitney Wright, senior music education major from Galena, Kansas, finished her rendition of Martina McBride's "Anyway," few dry eyes remained in Taylor Auditorium after the Remember, Recognize & Renew memorial service on August 28.

The service, which also included a performance by the Missouri Southern Concert Chorale and ended with the release of 160 balloons to honor those who died of injuries from the May 22 tornado, memorialized lost loved ones and recognized efforts of the Missouri Southern community.

"The people that were really touched were the ones who felt the need to be here today," said Judy Elimelech, coordinator of disability services for MSSU, of the approximate 150 people in attendance at the service.

Jonathan Saunders, MSSU's Student Senate president, led the invocation. Dr. Sherry L. Buchanan, chair of the MSSU Board of Governors, expressed the support of the Board and encouraged those in attendance to remain strong.

"We can choose to be survivors in spite of our victimization," said Buchanan.

Darren Fullerton, '88, vice president for student affairs, introduced those speaking in honor of three members of the Southern community who were lost due to the tornado. Fullerton acknowledged that, although the physical campus was not touched, the university was still affected by the storm.

"Missouri Southern is not the buildings, the grounds, and the classrooms," said Fullerton. "Missouri Southern is the people. Our people — faculty, staff and students — make Missouri Southern what it is, and in that respect, we were definitely impacted by the storm."

Donna Krudwig spoke in memory of her son-in-law, Donald Lansaw. Lansaw was married to Bethany Lansaw, who works in Educational Talent Search at MSSU. Krudwig shared the story of how Donald saved her daughter.

"He is truly a hero to my family," said Krudwig.

Beatrice Haase-Dubuis spoke in memory



Top, Dr. Sherry L. Buchanan, chair of the MSSU Board of Governors, offers encouragement to those who attended the campus memorial service. Above left, Whitney Wright, senior music education major, closes her eyes as she sings "Anyway" at the conclusion of the service. Above right, Dr. Glenn Coltharp, dean of the school of education, and Alicia Hughes, '03, bursar, release balloons after the service on August 28. — Photos by Mike Gullett and Willie Brown, '13

of colleague Dr. José Alvarez, assistant professor of foreign languages.

"Dr. Alvarez will be remembered as somebody who was always willing to help and a plain good person," said Haase-Dubuis. "The campus and the foreign language department will never be the same."

The Rev. Justin Monaghan spoke in memory of MSSU student Abraham "Abe" Khoury.

"Abraham 'Abe' Khoury was my friend," said Monaghan. "I admired his ability to overcome hard times and knocks."

Debi Meeds, regional chief executive officer, and Chris Harmon, regional executive director of emergency services, both with the Greater Ozarks Chapter of the American Red Cross, presented a plaque to MSSU President Bruce Speck to honor the efforts of the university in the aftermath of the tornado.

"I marvel at all that was done to save

lives and bring comfort," said Meeds. "The university was unbelievable."

Meeds said Missouri Southern's efforts in setting up an emergency shelter and other services during the tornado's aftermath, have become a standard for the nation.

Speck announced that he and his wife, Carmen, were donating \$3,000 toward a scholarship fund in honor of the three men memorialized at the service so their lives would not be forgotten.

"These were three men in different stages of their lives, but three men who represent the character of this university," said Speck.

Speck spoke of how proud he is to be at Southern and how grateful he is for all of the efforts of the community.

"This community has demonstrated that it doesn't need to wait around for help," he said.

— Joanna Lee, '12



Volunteers sign up to help after May 22 in the Beimdiek Recreation Center. — Photo by Lee & Wyrsh



Missouri Department of Public Health offers free inoculations at an informational session hosted by the governor on May 26 on the Missouri Southern campus. Below, Maureen Burke, Missouri Department of Emergency Management, talks to a Joplin resident at the informational meeting. — Photos by Rhonda Clark, '00



Above, Paul Cheatham carries Maggie Ward, 8, from her home to emergency personnel on May 22. This photo by Mike Gullett, communication adjunct faculty member, appeared in USA Today. Below, workers use heavy machinery to lift loose debris into a truck for transport to area landfills. The large, black trucks were a common sight throughout the summer as the area raced to meet a FEMA deadline in August for removal of loose debris. — Photos by Mike Gullett





Meeting the needs

Southern works to help a community find the strength to recover and heal.

Children laughed and bounced on an inflatable slide or had their faces painted outside of Fred G. Hughes Stadium. The sounds of Offset Sunset, a local band comprised of Missouri Southern students, reverberated off the stands. Excited students, parents, teachers and administrators greeted each other and gathered school supplies that were being given away inside Leggett & Platt Athletic Center.

What a difference a few months can make. Throughout the summer, the Southern campus served as a staging site for many agencies to help the community recover after the tornado. But by August, most everyone was ready for fellowship and remembrance. The event on August 10 brought together thousands of people in the Joplin R-8 School District for the first time since the storm abruptly ended the 2010-11 school year. The event, "I Am Joplin," was the first of many that would signal signs of healing on the campus, which witnessed much heartache along with hope in the weeks following May 22.

A perfect storm

Craig Richardson, coordinator for fire safety and environmental health at Southern, knew as the police scanner squelched reports in the minutes after the tornado that this was a massive catastrophe. He had ridden out the storm with his wife at their home in north Joplin before contacting Rob Yust, '80, vice president for business affairs. Richardson wanted access to emergency supplies and vehicles so he could help in the community. Before he could get that chance, a call came in that the Greater Ozarks Regional Chapter of the American Red Cross would be setting up a shelter on campus.



Left, a volunteer at "I Am Joplin," August 10 at Southern, holds a parachute as children play. Above, Offset Sunset, a local band comprised of Southern students, plays at "I Am Joplin" on the field at Fred G. Hughes Stadium. — Photos by Willie Brown, '13

DID YOU KNOW?



45,556

Number of volunteers who arrived on campus after the tornado to sign up to work with AmeriCorps, a network of national service programs, which set up a staging area in Billingsly Student Center and organized cleanup efforts across the swath of destruction.

3,000+

Number of meals prepared per day by Sodexo in the first four days after the tornado struck.

73,926

Approximate number of meals served at the Red Cross shelter in Leggett & Platt Athletic Center before it closed June 12.

3,032

Approximate number of people served overnight at the shelter before it closed.

1,000+

Approximate number of people treated at the Health Sciences Building triage before it closed on May 27.



The Leggett & Platt Athletic Center looked much the same that evening as it had in the afternoon. Joplin High School had graduated almost 500 seniors that day. Chairs littered the gym floor, and green curtains and the R-8 school district crest provided a backdrop to the empty stage. Just the day before, Southern's graduates filled the same area. Within hours, a place for celebration turned into a refuge for the displaced.

Communication was limited to text messaging, which helped alert Southern employees of the urgent needs on campus. They worked alongside Red Cross volunteers setting up cots.

"Our people were everywhere," Yust said. "You couldn't throw a stick without hitting a Missouri Southern person. They just showed up."

Kelly Wilson, '80, head of the Advising, Counseling and Testing Services office, and her staff headed to campus after a text about 9 p.m. from Darren Fullerton, '88, vice president for student affairs.

"People were coming in and they had that dazed look," Wilson said. "It was raining, so they were coming in wet, and some of them were injured and didn't even realize they were injured. We served the immediate fundamental needs of shelter. Then the donations started coming in immediately — water, clothing, toiletries — so we were busy trying to organize that."

Richardson noticed something else as people came to Southern seeking shelter — he recognized many of them.

"It takes your breath away," he said. "You feel kind of helpless, and you want to help, but you've done what you can at this point. You've given them shelter, food, a shower, but you want to do more. You know there isn't more you can do, and your heart went out to them."

Helping hands

Dr. Tia Strait, '85 & '93, dean of the school of technology, was at home in Carthage, Missouri, when Brenda McDaniel, who works in the registrar's office, called to tell her to turn on the Weather Channel.

"Brenda said, 'What do you think?' I said we needed to go get the Health Sciences Building ready for patient care," Strait said.

The new Health Sciences Building quickly transformed from a classroom facility to a 29-bed

hospital. Faculty, staff, students and volunteers treated the wounded who came to campus. The service was direly needed, as Joplin faced a crisis with one hospital out of commission and another taxed to its limits.

"By Tuesday, we were caring for the rescue workers who got injured in the field," Strait said. "By the second day, we started seeing a strong need for mental health specialists."

Two Southern counselors, Faustina Abrahams and Mary Parker, received a quick training course in crisis and grief counseling from the Red Cross. It was helpful to have locally trained professionals to assist with those traumatized by the storm and provide "mental health triage."

Aaron Lewis, '99, athletics facilities coordinator, and his staff worked tirelessly to provide for those seeking shelter, including their pets. By Monday, a surplus of donations necessitated a move of the items to nearby College Heights Christian Church.

"An event like this definitely changes your perspective of this campus and who you work with," Lewis said. "I'm proud of this campus for all of the work that was accomplished during that time and of what they continue to do."

The campus had water but reduced pressure. Richardson said Missouri American Water Company placed a priority on correcting the situation, as hundreds of people poured into the facilities. Until pressure was restored, Mike Fox, maintenance technical supervisor, and the custodial staff used ingenuity to keep things flowing.

"They used large trash cans filled with water from the swimming pool to keep the toilets flushed. That was a huge help," said Bob Harrington, '98, director of the physical plant.

Richardson said another problem arose as news of the temporary morgue, set up on Lot 18 just south of Hughes Stadium, circulated through the shelter. The close proximity created security concerns as people looked for the missing. By Monday evening, the morgue had moved to an undisclosed location in Jasper County.

Temporary home base

Southern had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Red Cross less than a month before the May 22 tornado. The university would provide space for the shelter, but what campus of-



ficials hadn't counted on was the number of other agencies needing staging areas.

Few buildings went unused in the weeks and months after the storm. The residence halls housed first responders, military personnel and governor's staff members.

"We were the only facility big enough that was up and running," Richardson said. "There was nowhere else. Ozark Christian College had been turned into the command post for the Red Cross, which took everything over there. We were it, basically."

For almost four weeks, employees were relocated to other areas, as the university accommodated the agencies, Fullerton said. Even the simplest items, like extra telephones, were in short supply, and the IT department struggled to keep up with technology requests.

University Relations and Marketing Director Rod Surber and his office coordinated local, national and international media outlets that converged to cover the story, with the help of volunteers from Drury University and MSSU students and staff. Surber set up areas for the governor to conduct press conferences and meetings.

A governor-sponsored Community Resource Meeting, which brought together multiple state agencies on May 26, attracted several thousand to campus, looking for help and support.

"We were overwhelmed by the amount of work that needed to be done to coordinate the events, and then the president's visit a week later," said Surber.

The Joplin Community Memorial Service, at which President Obama spoke, created unique challenges.

"We had to find curtains and extra stanchions for security as well as flowers for the stage," said Surber, adding that local florists donated about \$3,000 worth of flowers. "We had one florist who had lost her home in the tornado, but she was thrilled to be able to do something to help out with the service."

His office did receive encouragement that week. Staff at the University of Alabama, which was affected by the April tornado that hit Tuscaloosa, sent a care package to show support.

Sodexo, the campus food service, fed people in the shelter, volunteers and first responders, in addition to delivering meals to the disaster areas.

"Mike Wonderly (director) and Sodexo did a fabulous job," Harrington said. "The response from the university was absolutely phenomenal. Everybody just jumped in and did whatever was needed. Some of our custodians worked 20 to 40 hours straight without going home."

Once the initial crisis was over and the residence halls emptied, displaced faculty, staff, students and their families would call the rooms home until more permanent housing could be found, Fullerton said. Things did not subside altogether, however.

"Even though the immediate response happened in the first few weeks, AmeriCorps and FEMA were on campus until August, so we were really in tornado response throughout the whole summer," he said.

Moving forward

Like the Joplin schools event on August 10, Southern continues to be a place for healing and restoration of a devastated community. The campus is still used for citywide meetings as well as concerts and other events to raise money and hope for the area. Many have discovered Southern's love and spirit.

"I'm proud to be an employee and I'm proud to be an alum of this institution," said Wilson, who has worked at MSSU for 25 years. "I always have been, but it's heightened because of all of this and what we're doing and what we've done."

Southern's response to the crisis hasn't gone unnoticed. Richardson said the governor's office requested a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Red Cross to see if other universities should have similar agreements.

And, Yust is working on a master plan of facility use to streamline the organization process.

"We were flying by the seat of our pants, but it turned out OK," he said.

Fullerton, who was about to head out with his son to Academy Sports on May 22, decided to wait out the storm. Academy was one of about 500 businesses destroyed that evening. The tornado has given him a new perspective.

"As a campus and individuals, we need to really focus on the moment," he said. "It's made us realize we might not have later."

— Rhonda Clark, '00

DID YOU KNOW?



551

Number of volunteers who worked at the Health Sciences Building triage unit.

DMORT

The Missouri Department of Public Safety and the federal Disaster Mortuary Response Team occupied the third floor of Billingsly Student Center, where professionals from across the country conducted DNA testing to assist in identifying the deceased. Willcoxon Health Center housed Missouri Highway Patrol officials, who took reports from people looking for loved ones and also counseled families who were given the sad news when the missing became a death statistic.

Agencies on campus:

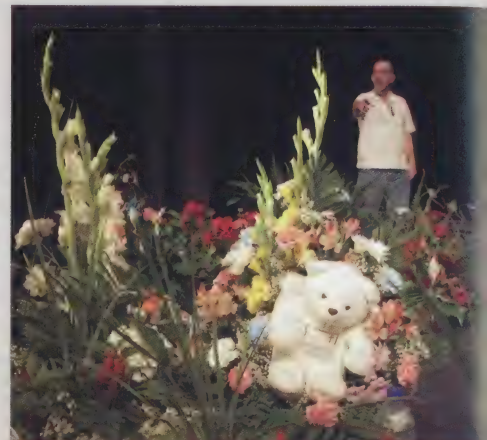
- American Red Cross
- AmeriCorps
- FEMA
- SEMA
- HUD
- IRS
- Small Business Administration
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Public Safety
- Missouri National Guard
- State Treasurer's Office

Sources: American Red Cross, Craig Richardson, Darren Fullerton, Tia Strait and Rod Surber



Left, President Barack Obama delivers remarks at the Joplin Community Memorial Service on May 29 at Taylor Auditorium. — Official White House Photo by Samantha Appleton

Above, members of the Patriot Guard assemble in the parking lot. Right, workers prepare the Taylor Auditorium stage for the service. — Photos by Lee & Wyrsh
Below, President Obama hugs Krista Stark, '07, who lost her mother, Loretta Randall, '81, just two days after her grandfather died in the tornado. — Tulsa World photo by Mike Simons



Resilience and strength

Community service brings thousands to campus.

Someone from the audience shouted, "We love you Obama." To which President Barack Obama said, "And I love Joplin."

A community in need of healing was ready to listen to the president's uplifting message of inspiration at the Joplin Community Memorial Service on May 29. Obama assured the audience the area would not be alone in its efforts to recover.

"Your country will be there with you every single step of the way," Obama said. "We aren't going anywhere ... That's not just my promise, that's America's promise."

At times, the applause was so loud it drowned out the president's voice inside Taylor Auditorium, which was filled to capacity with about 2,200 people. Approximately 8,000 others were scattered around campus, where they watched the service via closed circuit TV.

The community's actions in the aftermath of the tornado attracted international attention.

"The world saw how Joplin responded," Obama said. "A university turns itself into a makeshift hospital. Some of you used your pickup trucks as ambulances carrying the injured. The restaurants rushed food to those in need. The businesses filled trucks with donations."

Missouri Governor Jay Nixon, who introduced President Obama, also commented on the world's view of Joplin.

"That storm, the likes of which we have never seen, has brought forth a spirit of resilience the likes of which we've also never seen," Nixon said. "What our nation and our world have witnessed this week is the spirit of Joplin, Missouri."

He issued a challenge.

"For us the living, there is work to do," Nixon said. "God

said, 'Show me — show me.' The people of Missouri were born for this mission."

The cream-colored robes of the First United Methodist Chancel Choir members flanked the speakers as they offered messages of hope. The Reverend Aaron Brown of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, which was damaged by the storm, emphasized that life wins in the end.

"God loves Joplin, and he is walking with us," Brown said.

For Krista Stark, '07, attending the ceremony had special meaning. Her grandfather, Charles Oster, died in the tornado, and two days later, her mother, Lorretta Randall, '81, died from a blood clot that formed in her leg after she tripped over a downed pole while trying to find her father in the rubble. For two weeks, Stark's family had to delay their own memorial, so this service provided solace.

"The memorial service reinforced how caring President Obama was," said Stark, who, along with her grandmother Janet Oster, met the president and governor after the service. "It was a very positive interaction and comforting, and we as a city needed that comfort at that time."

Obama recounted stories of the storm's heroes, such as Dean Wells, manager of the Home Depot, and Christopher Lewis, manager at Pizza Hut, who gave their lives to save others.

"There are heroes all around us, all the time," Obama said.

"In the wake of this tragedy, let us live up to their example to make each day count — to live with that same compassion that they demonstrated in their final hours. We are called by them to do everything we can to be worthy of the chance to carry on."

— Rhonda Clark, '00

Photos from left, Missouri Governor Jay Nixon greets residents after the service, and President Obama consoles Betty Corbin of Joplin, who lost her home, as her friend, Mary Davis, '70, looks on. Many people wrote messages of encouragement on their shirts and American flags were displayed throughout the campus. People line the campus streets after the service. — Official White House photo by Pete Souza; other photos by Lee & Wyrsh



Restoring hope

National 9/11 Flag helps memorialize those lost 10 years ago and in May.

Missouri Southern President Bruce Speck summed up the feelings of everyone in the Leggett & Platt Athletic Center as he opened the 9/11 memorial service.

"For those who do not understand the power of freedom and the goodness of this country, let them come to Joplin," he said. "Let them see the outpouring of support from around the world... That is the spirit of America, and it is alive and well today."

The event started the morning of September 11 at Cunningham Park as the National 9/11 Flag was presented and held for a moment of silence honoring those who died in the Twin Towers attacks 10 years ago in New York City.

Members of the armed forces, police, firefighters, EMS personnel and tornado survivors took shifts holding the flag outstretched over 26th Street, with the destroyed St. John's Regional Medical Center in the background.

Dolores Hutcheson, a sergeant with the Mena, Arkansas, police department, attended the service, where she was brought to tears. She came with a message for Joplin.

"I hope that we can convey to the people of Joplin that it's going to be all right," she said.

"It's not going to be today, it's not going to be tomorrow, but at some point down the road you can come back and everything's going to be all right."

Mena was devastated by a tornado two years ago, killing three and injuring 30. She said Mena has nearly recovered, and Joplin will too.

The flag served as a backdrop for speeches delivered in Leggett & Platt Athletic Center, where individuals lined up afterward to take a stitch and restore the flag.

"There is something poetically right and fitting that this flag should complete its restoration a decade later in a city



A volunteer with the New York Says Thank You Foundation helps Brooklyn Jusino, 6, take a stitch to help restore the National 9/11 Flag on September 11, 2011, as her mother, Shiela Immesote, MSSU Food Service Support, looks on. Immesote and her daughter were in the 15th Street Walmart when it was severely damaged by the May 22 tornado in Joplin, Missouri. The flag made its final stop in Joplin before becoming a part of the permanent collection at the National September 11 Memorial and Museum in New York. — Photo by Mike Gullett

with every stitch



just beginning its own restoration, a city who has itself become a symbol of courage, resiliency and unity, demonstrating once again what it means to be an American," said Joplin Police Chief Lane Roberts.

The service wasn't just about New York City or Joplin but the country as a whole as it continues to heal 10 years later.

The National 9/11 Flag has been touring the country for more than four years, slowly being restored. Jeff Parness, founder of the New York Says Thank You Foundation, has led the effort to restore the flag.

"In the days after September 11, 2001, a 30-foot American flag hung dangling, torn and tattered, from a scaffolding directly south of where the World Trade Center once stood," Parness said.

That flag started its restoration process in Greensburg, Kansas, after an EF-5 tornado decimated 95 percent of the town. Survivors of that disaster came to watch the final pieces come together.

"Our goal was to make this flag whole again on the 10th anniversary of 9/11, at which point it will become part of the permanent collection at the 9/11 museum," Parness said.

Joplin was the last stop on the tour, allowing residents to put their stitch in a flag that has seen more devastation than any ever should. Cara Gooch, freshman marketing and management major, attended the flag stitching ceremony.

"I got goose bumps," she said. "This is history in the making."

Robert Hutcheson has followed the flag since the tour stopped in Mena last year.

"I can't even tell you what that flag means to me," he said as tears welled up in his eyes.

Parness said Joplin needs to remember the day after the tornado. "Never forget May 23," he said. "Never forget the kindness, the volunteers who came here because that shows the world who we really are."

"Never forget May 23. Never forget the kindness, the volunteers who came here because that shows the world who we really are."

— Nathan Mills, '12



Above, a woman waves to members of the Joplin Fire Department as they escort the National 9/11 Flag through town on its way from Cunningham Park to Missouri Southern for the stitching ceremony. The destroyed Joplin High School is in the background. Below, Joplin area law enforcement officers and firefighters hold the flag in front of St. John's Regional Medical Center during a moment of silence at the time of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. Right, Rikki Smith, service learning coordinator, holds the flag at the outdoor ceremony. — Photos by Mike Gullett and Willie Brown, '13





National 9/11 Flag

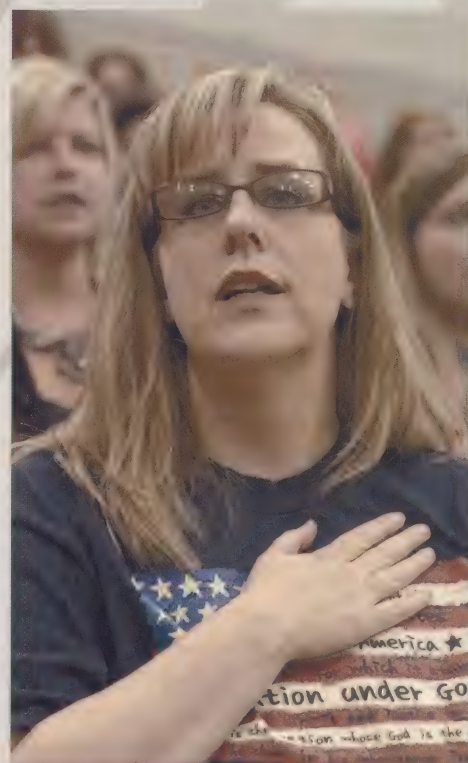
► Flag roughly measures 20 feet high by 30.5 feet wide.

► Flag was located on the upper left scaffolding on the west facade of 90 West Street, south of the South Tower of the World Trade Center in New York.

► Initial intent was to retire this flag. On the 2008 9/11 anniversary, it was taken to Greensburg, Kansas, as a symbol of hope and resilience of the American spirit after a tornado destroyed the town. The initial restoration began with stitching flags salvaged from the tornado.

► In its fully restored state, the Flag will have pieces of American flags scheduled to retire from all 50 states.

Source: New York Says Thank You Foundation



Top, the National 9/11 Flag is raised in Leggett & Platt Athletic Center. Above, Becky Rives, '99, Oronogo, Missouri, recites the Pledge of Allegiance. Rives' husband, Rusty, is a Joplin police officer and graduate of the MSSU Police Academy. Left, people at MSSU paint Stars of Hope, which were set up around Joplin. More than 3,000 stars memorialized those killed on 9/11 and May 22. — Photos by Mike Gullett and Rhonda Clark, '00

Ready to serve

Unexpected reunion gives alumna chance to help Joplin area recover.

Every American must feel personally connected to Joplin after the devastating tornado ripped through the heart of the city. As a former Joplin resident and a graduate of Missouri Southern State College, my connection runs deep.

My family heard about the tornado while watching the local storm coverage in Jefferson City. It took almost two hours before we heard about the disaster. As the state public affairs officer for the Missouri National Guard, it was immediately apparent we would be mobilized, so I put on my uniform and headed to the office, while still under a tornado watch for our area.

My husband, Brad, served as a highway patrolman in the area when we lived there, and as a current reserve deputy in Cole County, he also wanted to head to Joplin, but family commitments and support of my role in the Guard kept him home.

After arriving at headquarters, my adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Stephen L. Danner, was already there with about a dozen others at work, some in uniform, some in civilian clothes, ready to support Joplin.

Gov. Jay Nixon knew this disaster would exceed the resources of the city of Joplin, and he mobilized every state asset that would be able to help, including the Guard.

And of course, Guardsmen in the Joplin area had done much the same as myself — put on their uniforms and went to work.

For the first 48 hours, I supported the Joplin effort from Jefferson City, coordinating public affairs support for our mobilized Citizen-Soldiers. As recovery efforts continued to increase, I headed to Joplin on a Missouri National Guard plane on May 25. My kids, Morgan, 13, and Gavin, 9, helped me pack and were supportive about me mobilizing. Everyone wanted to help Joplin, and I was getting the opportunity to do it first-hand. I was coming down to help support Gov. Nixon and our Missouri National Guard state chaplain, Chap. Gary Gilmore, as they reached out to faith-based leaders.

The meeting and press event were held

at no other than Missouri Southern State University, and Webster Hall at that. As a communications major and former editor on *The Chart*, I had spent many an hour in Webster. As we entered a back door of the building, surrounded by all my senior Missouri National Guard and state leaders, the first person I saw was Ward Bryant, one of my professors. He recognized me immediately and gave me a huge hug, making me feel special while surrounded by my peers.

It felt wonderful to be there, even under tragic circumstances. After our daughter was born and my graduation in 1998, my family moved to Jefferson City, and I had not been back.

After the faith-based outreach, we switched modes in supporting another Gov. Nixon initiative, the Community Response Meeting, also to be held May 26 at the Taylor Performing Arts Center. Gov. Nixon wanted to pool every state resource available and put them at the fingertips of affected citizens. More than 2,000 residents packed the auditorium and surrounding support areas. I was touched upon hearing about a Joplin resident who was able to get a new driver's license, and she told the employee they must have been sent by God to help her. It is still hard to grasp how a family begins to recover when they have lost everything, even the ability to prove who they are. Gov. Nixon offered her a bit of hope, in seemingly hopeless surroundings.

At that meeting, I also reunited with Rick Rogers, '98, a fellow *Chart* staffer and then-publisher of the *Neosho Daily News*. He was preparing to move his family from the area for professional opportunities when the tornado struck. He immediately went to work to help the community understand what had happened. It was great to reconnect with one of my old editors.

When we rolled up the carpet at Taylor on Thursday, it wasn't rolled for long, as Gov. Nixon was planning a Community Memorial Service on Sunday, and President Barack Obama was expected to attend.

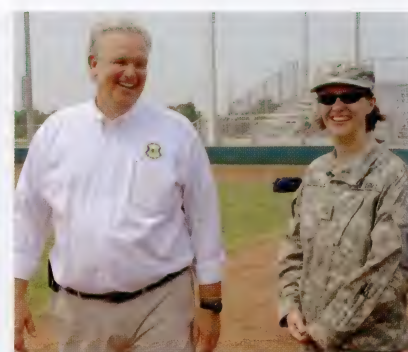
With all these MSSU centric events, we were blessed to be so supported by the University and were even housed in the dorms. My group spent nearly a week at East Hall — wonderful accommodations — and we were so appreciative of the support. Mayes Student Life Center provided food, either in the cafeteria or as sack meals, depending on our operational tempo. The sack meals were really very good and nutritious; fruit and light snacks were always included.

My time in Joplin hit a couple of low points. One was when we lost a Missouri National Guard soldier, who was killed in Home Depot. His wife and son went through more trauma than anyone can imagine, with him first being missing, then waiting on final identification through the casualty process. I had the honor of attending his visitation in Seneca, Missouri, and hugging his widow. It was quite something to see the Patriot Guard standing outside holding flags in his honor on the streets of small-town Missouri. It was a personal reminder of the tragedy so many were facing.

Once we began the major planning for the memorial service, two of the most helpful people on campus were Rod Surber, with University Relations and Marketing, and Don Ross, chief broadcast engineer. They and many others on Southern's staff and faculty were astounding. I feel blessed to have worked under the command of Col. Glenn Hagler for the ceremony. His steadfast attention to detail, calmness under pressure and delegation of true authority made the planning and execution flawless.

Another low point was when a Missouri National Guard Humvee, traveling from our base of operations at Camp Crowder to Joplin to assist with security operations there, was in an accident. Everyone is recovering, but as they were flown to the hospital, we didn't know. To make matters worse, one of the soldiers badly injured was the son of one of my public affairs team. So, another personal event that affected the mood.

Days have blended together, but the



Left, Major Tammy Spicer and members of the Missouri National Guard stand with members of the St. Louis Cardinals, who were in Joplin to promote a game with the Kansas City Royals to raise money for tornado relief efforts. Above, Spicer and Missouri Governor Jay Nixon share a laugh on the diamond at the promotional event. — Courtesy photos

immense amount of work accomplished in such a short time still amazes me. And all the time, I was immersed back at Southern.

I was at the press event at Webster Hall when Deputy Director of Department of Public Safety Andrea Spillars announced the newly released list of missing persons. I stood with another of my instructors, Judy Stiles, as she recognized a name on that list that had been listed twice. She showed grace when some would have crumbled.

As everyone in Joplin knows, the Joplin Community Memorial Service was a hopeful event for the affected citizens and their neighbors. One of the press we credentialed was Rhonda Clark, another former *Chart* editor and now professor at Southern and editor to *Crossroads*. The media were all patient and supportive of our efforts that day. The event itself was remarkable and will always hold a place in my heart. President Obama couldn't have walked away without understanding the spirit of the community. And I love the photos of the events, with the local choir as the backdrop. Awesome.

An aspect of my mobilization that was gratifying was the ability to so closely connect with my fellow citizen-soldiers and airmen. Lt. Col. Denise Wilkinson was my roommate in the dorm, and we shared our sitting room with Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michelle Struempf and Capt. Sandy Stover. It was nice to bond with my fellow female leaders. In addition, the Missouri National Guard public affairs team was fantastic, and my respect for them grew every day. Capt.

Stover, Lt. John Quin, Sgt. 1st Class Parrish Taggart, Sgt. Jon Dougherty, Spc. Adam Winters, Nancy Lane, Ann Keyes, Matthew Wilson, Jennifer Archdekin and our volunteer from Fort Leavenworth, Rebecca Steed, worked like a well-oiled machine. It was also amazing to work so closely with the president's staff, and I was honored to receive a Presidential Coin.

When the Memorial Service support came to a close, my mission shifted across town, to our Missouri National Guard Armory on 32nd Street, which sustained some damage during the tornado. One of the most significant effects was water damage to the History Room. We have a robust retiree organization in the 203rd Engineer Battalion, and they maintain nearly 100 years of history in a room that was flooded when the roof of the armory was damaged.

Another fellow Lion I encountered many times over my mobilization was John Hacker, '95, managing editor of the *Carthage Press*. He seemed to be at every media event, sometimes in different parts of town on the same day. He and I never worked on *The Chart* together, but we have many mutual friends, leading us to feel closely connected.

We talk a lot about Joint Operations in the military, and I have never seen it work better than in Joplin. City Public Information Officer Lynn Onstot, '85; Gov. Jay Nixon and his team; the Army Corps of Engineers; the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and many other agencies worked together every day to ensure our citizens got the

response they deserved.

During my more than two-week deployment to Joplin, I received an email from Ward Bryant offering me whatever support I needed, including a warm family meal. When we were supporting Gov. Nixon and the St. Louis Cardinals as they announced a major fundraising effort with the Kansas City Royals, Rod Surber and Don Ross were supporting the needs of the event. I also saw Rod when Gov. Nixon opened his state support office in Joplin. It felt like we were old friends.

One evening, I managed to slip in a dinner with one of my college chums, Ginny Andrews, '00, (formerly Dumond). Her family lives north of Joplin, and suffered some light storm damage, but had been busy since the tornado supporting other affected families. It was such a break to share a meal and memories with a close friend.

When I returned to the campus on June 6 for the Town Hall meeting that announced the expedited debris removal program, I was, once again, reunited with Judy Stiles, Don Ross, Rhonda Clark and Rod Surber, all working hard to support the community.

During my 16 days in the disaster zone, it was apparent Missouri Southern State University was such an integral part of Joplin and southwest Missouri. My mobilization to Joplin was a rewarding experience. I have never been more proud of my degree.

— Major Tammy Spicer, '98,
State Public Affairs Officer,
Missouri National Guard



Crossroads associate editor Kisa Clark (left), ABC's Diane Sawyer and University of Missouri student Nicole Niziolek take time for a photo after a live broadcast of ABC's "World News" near St. John's Regional Medical Center on May 24. — Courtesy photo

A story too close

Covering a catastrophic event can be difficult when it's in your backyard, even when with a national news team.

May 22 started out as a beautiful Sunday that included a fun birthday celebration for a 1-year-old and a friend's wedding. The thought of bad weather didn't cross my mind until I learned that my friend was going to push her outdoor wedding from 7 that evening to 3:30 in the afternoon. Fortunately, the bride and groom left at 5:15 p.m. and the rest of the attendees headed out at 5:30, 11 minutes before an EF-5 tornado hit.

As I left, dark clouds started to roll in

from the west. My plan was to head to Missouri Southern to see a friend who was still living in the residence halls. For some reason, I decided to call my mom at our home in Neosho, knowing she would have the news on. It was probably one of the most important calls I've ever made. She said the storm was heading toward Joplin and I should go straight home. Although I knew she was probably right, it seriously crossed my mind to ignore her and see my friend instead, which would have turned

me left down Range Line Road minutes before the tornado hit.

The 25-minute drive home to Neosho, Missouri, seemed to last much longer as I anxiously waited for more news on the radio, getting goose bumps listening to the announcers speak of a tornado touching down in Joplin.

As I pulled into the drive, my dad and brother were waiting outside. They gave me a big hug, and my dad admitted that, although he was telling my mom other-

wise, he was really worried.

The next few hours and days were surreal. My family stayed glued to the television, watching local coverage as well as the National Weather Channel's Mike Bettes near St. John's Regional Medical Center, where we first realized the gravity of the situation. I will never forget my mom's gasp and tears when she saw those images. My mom has worked at St. John's for the past 11 years, and three of her employees were working that night. The terrified look in Bettes' eyes meant this was bad. When he broke down at the sight of bodies being drug out of the rubble, I also lost it.

We all began the heart wrenching attempts of communication as thousands of us tried to contact friends and loved ones. With many phone towers down, text messages were the best way to reach those in Joplin. Slowly, I began to learn that my friends and loved ones were safe. Some did not have homes, but they were OK, and that's all that really mattered.

For many people, sleep didn't come easy Sunday night. I felt restless and unsure how best to help. Early Monday, I received a call from both an instructor and a woman from ABC National News in New York City. Diane Sawyer and her crew from "World News" had contacted my instructor looking for help from local broadcast students. I immediately called back, took up the offer, and prepped to head to Joplin.

Nervous energy took over on the trip to Joplin. I didn't know how I was going to handle seeing the town torn apart. I met with an ABC crew member at North Middle School, where the Joplin School District was working. Superintendent C.J. Huff, who had not slept all night and had a million other concerns still took time to ask how I was doing. That simple gesture helped.

After meeting up with a journalism student from the University of Missouri and a member from ABC News at the ABC satellite truck in a neighborhood just west of Range Line near the 15th Street Walmart, reality sunk in. As the only local on the crew, I was responsible for most of the navigation around town, which was complicated due to the demolished landmarks, piles of debris, chaos of emergency vehicles, and rain. The sights were unbelievable. In just minutes, Joplin truly had been ripped



apart, like something on a disaster movie set.

The other student and I ran errands for the news crew over the next few days, getting food, umbrellas, equipment, or holding a corner of a pop-up tent in the wind and rain while Diane made a live broadcast. By Wednesday, Diane and most of the crew had returned to New York City, and only a few reporters remained. I went out in the field with a camera crew to set up interviews for a story on how teens were coping. Getting into the hardest hit areas, seeing people digging through their belongings, and hearing their stories of survival was a painful but rewarding experience.

Being able to say, "I'm with ABC's 'World News' with Diane Sawyer," was something I had dreamed about. And as awesome as it is to say, "Yeah, I worked with Diane Sawyer," I almost feel hurt every time I say it because it immediately takes me back to that first day and the horrors it held. The rainy hours driving around the huge piles of debris, seeing the flashing lights, knowing that people were still dying out there, it was all something out of a nightmare.

A week after the tornado, Joplin had a visit from President Obama for a special memorial service held by Governor Nixon.

Above, one of many unidentifiable cars sits in the parking lot of St. John's Regional Medical Center on May 24. Vehicles littered much of the Joplin area after the EF-5 tornado struck on May 22.

Right, debris, a truck and furnishings litter a heavily hit neighborhood west of the 15th Street Walmart in Joplin. Many residents spent the days after the tornado salvaging what was left of their homes.

— Photos by Kisa Clark, '11



MSSU's TV station KGCS fed coverage of the event to local stations. I operated a camera 15 feet from the stage at a ceremony that was moving and exactly what many people needed. My job was a bit more difficult as I fought the tears that sprung during the president's speech, but it was an unforgettable experience.

As the number of lives lost rose, including news of the death of MSSU Spanish professor Dr. José Alvarez, many days I found myself randomly breaking into tears after a run or driving somewhere. I wondered why something so awful had to happen here. I felt guilty about being annoyed by the small inconveniences caused by the storm, while so many others had lost so much. But then I would see how much this community came together, the progress it has already made, and the hope and strength of Joplin, those concerns faded. Joplin, our home, will recover, and May 22, 2011, will then be a distant memory.

— Kisa Clark, '11

A place to call home

Generosity and compassion instill pride in this community.

Living in the Ozarks for the better part of the decade has kept me acquainted with tornados. Being more familiar with the sirens and the “drill” for a tornado, naturally, I went out on the front porch to watch the action.

Located only two blocks from complete devastation, I was mesmerized by what was happening to the city I call home. Between trees uprooting and windows blowing out as if an explosion had gone off in the cars out front, I couldn't look away. Immediately following the storm, three Missouri Southern track athletes and I took off on foot. We came to the end of the street at the roundabout at 20th Street and Duquesne Road and stood there in shock.

“... we continued to the convenience store at the roundabout. With the smell of gas spewing from its gas pipelines, we began digging.”

A man was walking around in a daze. I noticed that his arm was badly injured, and I immediately took my shirt off and used it as a tourniquet. Sending him on his way toward Range Line Road, we continued to the convenience store at the roundabout. With the smell of gas spewing from its gas pipelines, we began digging.

By the end of the evening, I had many cuts on my body that in any normal situation I would have realized immediately that I had hurt myself. The amount of adrenaline that was going through my body was more than I had ever experienced.

Living here in Joplin through this tragedy has completely restored my faith in society. The amount of love and ambition to help has done nothing more than make me proud to be a part of this community.

— Sam Pogue, '13



Crossroads associate editor Sam Pogue leans on a tree stump in front of a house in Duquesne, Missouri, near where the Southern student and his friends helped people who were trapped in their homes or businesses after the tornado struck on May 22. — Photo by Willie Brown, '13

Final countdown

For some, a few minutes
meant the difference
between danger and safety.

On May 22, I was running some errands around Joplin with my fiancé, Terrence Scott, '10, before heading to Neosho to visit with my parents. Our last stop was at Walmart on Range Line Road for Terrence to get new tires for his car. Before we entered the store, we sat in the parking lot talking for quite some time. Looking back, I'm thankful we stopped talking when we did. Once we turned his car in, we decided to look around the store while it was being worked on. Shortly after this, his car was ready to go and we left Walmart at approximately 5:15 to head toward Neosho.

Just as we got onto the highway, I received a text from my dad saying to be careful because the weather was getting bad. I honestly didn't think anything of it because I had grown up with these warnings and had yet to really see any results from them. We got to my parents' house around 5:35, and I could tell they were relieved to see us. I still was not feeling concerned about the weather and continued to feel this way until I heard a tornado had touched down in Joplin. This is when the stories started coming in of all the destruction that was taking place. It all seemed surreal to me but soon became a reality when I began receiving texts from friends making sure I was all right. We turned the TV on to the Weather Channel.

To our utter horror, we saw the devastating sight of the area surrounding St. John's hospital. This led my family to become concerned. My sister lives in Joplin, and her house is very close to this

"Seeing how everyone responded to this natural disaster has made me so proud to be a part of this community."



Amber Heiskell, Crossroads art designer, was at the 15th Street Walmart in Joplin, Missouri, minutes before the tornado hit. — Photo by Amber Heiskell, '12

area. It did not ease our anxiety when we were not getting any response from her due to the bad reception. Thankfully, she was fine and her house was not hit.

The destroyed city was unrecognizable. It wasn't until I saw the area in person that I was able to fully experience the impact of the situation. My dad and I went up that following Wednesday to bring water to my sister and her boyfriend, so this was when I first saw it all. It was heartbreaking to see this familiar city in such chaos yet there was something that occurred that allowed hope to remain in everyone's hearts. It was the amount of help that came from all over the country.

Terrence's church, Joplin Family Worship Center, was doing a lot of work for the area. Terrence spent time helping out

in any way he could. I also spent a short time helping at JFWC by helping victims go through all the donations to find what they needed.

Even though it was a small amount of time spent there, it truly affected me. Seeing people get so excited over detergent or a toothbrush really made me happy to help and also thankful for all of the people who donated. I also helped one of my friends look for another house since she had lost hers. It was hard to see someone I know so well having to deal with all this loss, but she handled it very well.

I had to leave the following week for a study abroad trip, so it was hard leaving in all the chaos. Seeing how everyone responded to this natural disaster has made me so proud to be a part of this community.

Joplin is already working hard and fast to rebuild, and it is inspiring to witness what is possible when everyone works together.

—Amber Heiskell, '12



Lakin Adams, Crossroads associate editor, volunteered at Forest Park Baptist Church at Seventh Street and Range Line Road, one of the many places where people found food and drink during the weeks that followed the tornado. — Photo by Andrew Pavlovic, '11

Unexpected thanks

Even the simplest gestures make an impression on others.

This small rural area has only been one thing to me all my life: home. My family, school, work and friends are all here. The big question in high school when we received a new student was always the same, "Why did your parents pick this area?"

The older I've gotten, the more I see that even though this part of the country may not have a million things to do, it is and will always have the most important thing going for it, which is my family.

When the May 22 tornado devastated a third of Joplin, I was shocked. I was very blessed to have been untouched, but unfortunately hundreds were not, including some of my close friends.

About a week after the storm, a friend

and I decided to volunteer and helped pass out food and drinks to volunteers. We walked many miles that day and passed block after block of destroyed houses and busy volunteers trying their best to make sure everyone was found and given aid.

As we were walking, we came across a group searching for survivors. As my friend and I were thanking one of the searchers for everything he's done, he stopped and thanked us. We weren't doing half of what he was and here he was thanking us?

He looked at us seriously then and said, "If I had a daughter and this happened to her, I would want everyone to be looking for her night and day. This is not easy work mentally or physically, and you

making sure we're fed helps me continue to look for those daughters and get them home. You are helping just as much as I am. So, we appreciate you and thank you."

He and his wife had driven down from Kansas City to help with search and rescue. The kindness and hard work I saw that day and after astounds me.

Through the rain and heat, people stepped up and did what needed to be done, simply because people were hurt and they needed help. The clothes, supplies, food and time people have donated are amazing. Joplin is slowly but surely on the path to healing. It'll take time, but I have no doubt that it will get there.

— Lakin Adams, '12

Surviving a crazy storm

Near-death experience leads to a greater appreciation of life.

My tornado experience isn't really any different from anyone else's, I suppose.

I was working at Joplimo Mattress near 20th Street and Range Line Road when the storm hit, and the store was destroyed with me inside.

I heard the sirens go off but thought nothing of it, just like many in Joplin. This happens all the time, so why should I be scared now?

After the second siren, I looked outside to see what was going on. A crazy storm was definitely headed my way. Time spent working at KSNF-TV let me know the warning signs, and I prepared to take cover.

I sent a text to my fiancée to let her know. She replied that she knew and asked me what was going on. By the time I got that text, I was unable to answer.

I locked the door after sending my initial message, hoping that would somehow protect me from what was about to happen. It didn't.

Cars pulled into the parking lot with people seeking shelter, and I tried to get to them. I unlocked the door and worked to open it, but the winds were so strong it wouldn't budge.

The glass around me started to shake, so I knew I needed to get out of the way.

I dove in the hallway just as the roof ripped off the building, and the doors and windows blew in. The building was ripped away from me entirely, and the last thing I remember before things cleared is getting hit in the back with a large object. I found out later it was a dumpster.

It hit so hard it spun me completely around, knocking me to my back. I rolled over to protect my face and torso, and the rest is just a blur. My phone, still in my hand, was covered in blood from my arms and face. I could hear things flying around me, too frightened to look up.

As things started to settle, I remember looking up and seeing no roof. I then looked



Nathan Mills, Crossroads associate editor, stands on the vacant lot where he worked at Joplimo Mattress the day the tornado hit. The business was leveled that evening, but Mills survived with only minor injuries. — Photo by Andrew Pavlovic, '11

to my sides and realized there was no building at all. In fact, I had been left completely in the open. I stayed in the rain for what seemed like eternity, saying goodbyes in my head. I thought I had made it through the first half of the tornado and the back end would come and finish me off.

I really thought it was going to be the day I'd die.

That's a strange feeling. To be honest, it's hard to put into words. I wasn't scared as much as I was disappointed. I had so much ahead of me, and it felt like it was being yanked away just as I was on the cusp of getting it all.

After several minutes of rain and hail, I made it to safety. Cell service was spotty, so I didn't hear from my fiancée, mom and several others for close to two hours. They thought I was dead.

Every single day, I look back to May 22 and remember just how lucky I am.

In the months since the tornado, I haven't taken that luck for granted. I'm seizing opportunities and taking chances, living life the way I think a man should.

It may sound crazy coming from a lifelong atheist, but yes, that includes going to church. You see, I realize how lucky I was, but in retrospect, I see that there was no luck involved at all. In fact, luck doesn't even exist.

What we do in this life isn't coincidental. It happens for a reason. I was protected that day, and I know it. I may not know why, but I know that for whatever reason, I was kept around.

My work here isn't done.

Last May included the scariest day of my life. Next May, I will graduate from college, something nobody else in my family has ever achieved.

By then, I'll be married to the love of my life. With any luck, we'll start a family soon after, and all those things I was mad about almost losing on May 22 will be in my hands.

I suppose the moral here isn't what we do in a time of crisis. People reacted in many different ways, and I was likely one of the worst. I withdrew and grew depressed.

What matters, though, is what we do after the crisis. While I certainly wish the tornado never happened, it taught me a valuable lesson. Sometimes in life, you just have to go after what you want.

I have everything I want. I'm about to get even more. From near death to a full life — now that's the way to do things after a tornado.

The best part, though, is that I know I'm not the only one to come out on top. The entire city of Joplin has done the same, and I couldn't be more proud to call this my home.

— Nathan Mills, '12

Wild ride

In search of safety, one family finds that a car is no match for an EF-5.



Megan Harrison, '08, and Chris James relax at home with their sons, Rowan (left), Camden and Gavin. The family narrowly avoided tragedy on May 22 when they drove straight into the storm. Camden was born just over two months after the harrowing ordeal. — Photo by Aaron DuRall, '11

At 2:59 p.m. on August 7, Camden Christopher James came into the world. Just a few months earlier, his mother was terrified she might not see her baby born.

Missouri Southern alumna Megan Harrison, '08, was spending a typical Sunday evening playing with the sons of her boyfriend, Chris James, when sirens sounded on May 22.

"I heard them go off, so I stepped outside just to see if I could see anything," Harrison said. "It looked fine, so I came inside and turned on the news."

A large storm cell was brewing just

outside of Galena, Kansas, not far from Harrison's west Joplin home.

"I'm kind of freaking out because I'm scared of storms to begin with," said Harrison, who was 28 weeks pregnant at the time.

She called James and asked him to come home. His mother called and invited the family to her Arbor Hills home, which has a basement. Harrison met

James in the garage, where they loaded the two boys — Gavin, 5, and Rowan, 4 — into the car and headed south.

"I could tell (James) thought we should stay," Harrison said. "I was thinking about the boys, and I was freaking out, so I said we should try to make it to Arbor Hills. It was the wrong decision, obviously."

A black wall loomed in their path at

Schifferdecker Road and West 20th Street.

"I was telling her I think we're driving right into it," James said. "I wanted to turn around at 20th Street, but I was being told, 'Let's go, let's go.' You don't argue with a 28-week pregnant woman."

Debris swirled around them as transformers blew. James made a hard left turn at 26th Street, a turn Harrison said saved their lives.

"I couldn't even see to drive anymore," James said.

Harrison, a producer at KSNF-TV in Joplin, knew a car was a bad place to be in a storm. James pulled into a driveway and got out of the car to ask the homeowner if they could come inside. Harrison thought James might fly away.

"He didn't even make it a couple steps away from the car before the car started rolling backward," Harrison said.

The car slid about 15 yards, and James hopped in and hit the brakes. As the outer edge of the tornado hit them, debris broke the back glass.

"We looked back there to try and get the kids," Harrison said. "We both panicked because we didn't see Rowan in the backseat. I didn't know if maybe he had gotten out trying to find Chris. Rowan's always two steps behind Chris."

"Chris is screaming, 'Rowan,' and we're looking around. He had hit the floorboard and put his hands over his head."

Harrison and James pulled the boys into the front seat and covered them with their bodies.

"The whole time, I didn't really know what to do besides pray," Harrison said. "I just put myself over them and prayed for several minutes that we were going to be OK."

James took another step to protect his family.

"I remember putting my back up against the window in case anything else came flying in," he said.

The wind and debris continued to hammer the vehicle.

"I heard the screams of Megan," James said. "You could hear wind and destruction, but I just heard Megan."

Once the storm was over, they turned out of the driveway and realized how lucky they were.

"We could see just several blocks

down from us entire houses were gone," Harrison said.

"It was like God had his hands over us," James added.

Downed trees and power lines made it impossible for them to reach James' mother's house. They drove back home, the whole way on a flat tire. They had to get home; even without a basement, it was safer than the car.

"I kept thinking, oh my god, we're in this car, and," Harrison lowered her voice to keep the kids from hearing, "we're going to die in this car."

The stress of their ordeal created more worries for Harrison and her unborn son.

"I remember having my hands on my stomach and thinking, 'I just want to feel him move,'" she said.

After the storm, Harrison was pulling 12-hour shifts at the TV station. By the second day of that schedule, she started having early contractions.

"I was trying to call the hospital while I was at work one day, and I couldn't get a hold of anyone. I'm just sitting there in the edit bay just crying because I'm afraid something's happening," Harrison said.

When KODE news anchor Tiffany Alaniz found Harrison crying, she made sure Harrison saw a doctor. A couple of days off reduced her stress, and the contractions stopped.

On June 25, Harrison's best friend threw her a baby shower at the same home they were trying to reach for safety just one month earlier.

Harrison had opened her gifts, finishing with a crib, when her friend asked, "OK, does anyone have anymore presents for Megan?"

"I thought, 'But I just opened the big one, what else do you have?'" Harrison thought.

James stepped around the corner of the room.

"I didn't know what he was doing until I saw he had a black box in his hand," Harrison said. "Then he got down on one knee in front of everyone."

James started planning the proposal two days beforehand.

"I knew that I was going to ask her to marry me, but I had no idea when," he said.

The two have yet to set a date, as life continues to be hectic.

"The whole time, I didn't know what to do besides pray. I just put myself over them and prayed for several minutes that we were going to be OK."

Megan Harrison, '08

Missouri Southern State University alumna who rode out the storm in a car with her family.

As for Gavin and Rowan, they ask about the tornado every day: Why is it cloudy? Why is the wind blowing?

"They automatically associate the rain and clouds with the tornado," Harrison said. "I try to tell them there's going to be storms, there's going to be rain, there's going to be clouds and hard winds, but that doesn't mean there's going to be a tornado all the time. It's hard to tell a little kid something like that after what they've seen."

As Harrison cradled her newborn son, she admitted she learned one lesson on May 22.

"Definitely don't get in the car," she said. "After we were here and everyone was calmed down, Chris said, 'Next time we listen to me. Next time we listen to Chris.'"

— Nathan Mills, '12

We interrupt our regular programming

For many, radio became a crucial source of information, and one on-air personality had a familiar voice.

After the tornado hit Joplin on May 22, much of the community lost power. What tends to be lost is that many people had no way to get news. Whether that news was related to the tornado or not, people affected by the storm were left in the dark for some amount of time — or until they could tune in to the radio.

One of the voices that provided much needed information and comfort was that of Daron Harris, or “Snacks” as most people know him.

Harris, who played on the Missouri Southern men’s basketball team for two years, started working as a disc jockey on Kissin’ 92.5 in 2006, when he took a position as an intern. Since then, Harris has worked his way up and is now one of the most popular radio hosts in the area.

When the sirens went off, he was at work.

“I was at the stations of Zimmer Radio when the storm touched down,” Harris said. “I realized it was not a joke when the sirens went off twice. That is some-

thing that rarely happens.”

Harris didn’t go on the air right away. As the days wore on and the management at Zimmer Radio decided they were going to have nonstop coverage for a prolonged period of time, Harris was one of several personalities to be assigned a shift.

Zimmer Radio Group consists of a cluster of radio stations based in Joplin, including Kissin’ 92.5, KIX 102.5 and News Talk 1310 AM. After the tornado, 1310 AM took over all of the Zimmer stations for wall-to-wall coverage of the storm, the aftermath and the relief effort.

Harris, known by his friends and listeners as a laid back, funny guy, knew the time for jokes was over for the moment.

“(My bosses) didn’t really say much,” Harris said. “I think our bosses knew that we were all professionals and knew how serious this situation was; it was time to put all the joking aside.”

Over the next few days, Harris fielded live, on-air phone calls from people wanting to know how to help, people with information, and people who had lost

everything. No matter why they called, Harris said he will never forget those shifts on the air.

“For me, just about all of the calls were memorable,” Harris said. “But, the ones that stick out the most are when listeners would call in to let us know that we had helped them link back up with family members and friends.”

For a long time after the storm, the radio was the lone source of information for many people in the town, as cable and satellite television were out for many residents. Harris was proud of how Zimmer Radio had come through for Joplin.

“It was awesome to know that we were a key source in saving lives and again reuniting lost ones back together,” Harris said. “I don’t think it hit us as personalities until the second week in that we were really the only source of communication for a while and to be able to be that source that people rely on is great.”

Eventually, the music had to start back. After almost two weeks of nonstop tornado coverage and updates, Zimmer



Daron Harris, aka "Snacks," takes a time out at the Zimmer Radio studio where he works as an on-air personality. — Photo by Aaron DuRall, '11

Radio returned to regular programming. For some, this was the first step in the return to some sort of normalcy.

"It was our job for us to stay on as long as the listeners needed us. It was hard to go back to music," Harris said. "But, at the same time, it was time to give listeners something different. It was time to hit 'refresh.'"

Through it all, Harris had a unique view of the disaster on May 22. He saw it through the eyes of the people who were most heavily affected. He listened to people's stories of loss. He received thanks from people who received help finding missing loved ones. He gave vital information to rescue workers and volunteers from all over the United States.

Harris said this tragedy taught him to cherish every moment of life and to stay humble. It also showed him the charitable side of America.

"How this country came together to help a small town — Joplin," Harris said. "I'll never forget it."

— Jesse Cordova, '11

"I don't think it hit us as personalities until the second week in that we were really the only source of communication for a while and to be able to be that source that people rely on is great."



Taking care of business

Southern centers help area companies recover after catastrophic storm.

Missouri Southern graduates, with tassels gleaming, eagerly waited for their moment on May 21 to receive that long-anticipated diploma. The next day, clouds of catastrophe overshadowed Joplin.

The School of Business Administration faculty, students and staff experienced personal and profound losses of family members, homes, jobs and businesses. The campus community pulled together, giving of its time and resources to help those in need.

One goal in the SOBA strategic plan is to facilitate business development to meet the needs of the community. That objective was realized and put to the test by two SOBA centers: the Small Business & Technology Development Center and the Heartland Procurement Technical Assistance Center, both housed on the first floor of Plaster Hall. The two groups worked to counsel and empower Joplin area business as they made plans to rebuild.

Recovery efforts of the SBTDC

Four days after the May 22 tornado, the MSSU Small Business & Technology Development Center opened the Business Recovery Center in conjunction with the Small Business Administration, Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Joseph Newman Business and Technology Innovation Center. In a matter of weeks, the center assisted 253 Joplin area businesses. In a typical year, the SBTDC counsels, on average, 200 businesses from Joplin and the surrounding counties.

The Business Recovery Center is staffed by SBA customer service representatives to assist with home and business loans. The SBTDC's role is to assist business owners with business plans, financial statement reconstruction, completion of loan paperwork, and assistance with resources for the businesses. The SBTDC staff, in conjunction with University of Missouri's Extension, staff from the SBDC at Pittsburg State University, and statewide staff from the Missouri SBTDC program have served at the BRC, which is currently open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Evening, weekend and holiday hours were available in May and June.

"Our goal is to assist business owners with good information to make informed decisions on the next steps they need to take after the disaster," said Lisa Robinson, '89, SBTDC director. "We



have been here for the business owners, will continue to be here for them, and are excited for the upcoming program expansion to be able to serve more businesses."

The Joplin community formed the Citizens Advisory Recovery Team, which includes four groups, each focused on recovery issues in one of the following areas: infrastructure, environment, housing, neighborhood planning, schools, community facilities, and economic development. The economic development group is known as Joplin Business Recovery and Expansion Initiative, and Robinson serves on this group's advisory board. The advisory board helps create better coordination and a quicker, more flexible response for business recovery and economic development.

Additionally, the SBTDC staff had been working with the Missouri Department of Economic Development on two loan initiatives for area small business owners. Karen Bradshaw, SBTDC consultant and director of the Center for Entrepreneurship, said it was a busy but rewarding summer.

"We are pleased to help business owners in their efforts to recover from the effects of the tornado and plan for the future," Bradshaw said.

The Missouri SBTDC has applied for additional SBA grant funding for Southern's SBTDC. The SBA grant is required to



“Our goal is to assist business owners with good information to make informed decisions on the next steps they need to take after the disaster.”

“Everyone was working with disaster-driven deadlines, and contractors were needed right away to fulfill a variety of roles during the relief effort,” said Terri Bennett, PTAC director. “We assisted the USACE and FEMA in finding appropriate types of businesses in order for the government to award contracts for certain services such as debris removal with only a short lead time, one of which was within three hours.”

Using a list of area business contacts, PTAC stepped in and secured businesses, both locally and in surrounding communities, to organize assistance. The PTAC explained the scope of work to local businesses, and at least one of the PTAC clients received a contract from the Corps the same day worth more than \$490,000.

In addition, PTAC assisted businesses with government registrations necessary prior to obtaining a contract with the federal government. The center has been able to expedite registrations by using the exclusive contact information created for its use by the federal government. It has also assisted with important corrections with businesses’ central contractor registration, an online enrollment process.

The PTAC was able to use its resources to communicate the needs of the federal government to businesses wanting to assist. The PTAC used client lists in its database as well. Some of the solicitations were set aside for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses. PTAC also reached out to the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business and Technology Development Center to solicit help in sharing information with the public.

“One of our clients lost their building, including information concerning their federal registrations and banking information, in the tornado,” said Bernie Franks, PTAC counselor. “They contacted us, and we obtained the information for them to quickly turn around their compensation.”

In addition to debris removal, PTAC assisted both businesses and the federal government with solicitations and contracts, such as providing space for FEMA trailers; hauling and installing FEMA modular facilities for citizens and schools; providing ice, janitorial services, office supplies and equipment for federal offices; and chartering buses to transport personnel from Kansas City to Joplin.

— Dr. Beverly Block, Interim Dean,
Robert W. Plaster School of Business Administration

Lisa Robinson, '89 (left), director of the Small Business & Technology Development Center, and Karen Bradshaw, SBTDC consultant and director of the Center for Entrepreneurship, counsel a Joplin-area business owner after May 22 at the Business Recovery Center. — Photo courtesy of the SBTDC

have a cash match, which comes from the JACC and the Joseph Newman Innovation Center.

The funding will hire a business consultant to be housed in the Innovation Center, and other programs will be developed and deployed as needed to assist the business community. The grant funding will be in place until September 30, 2013.

Recovery Efforts of the PTAC

The day after the tornado hit Joplin there was a Presidential declaration of an emergency issued for Jasper and Newton counties. That’s when the MSSU Heartland Procurement Technical Assistance Center reached out to the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The PTAC’s mission is to assist businesses in securing government contracts through training, understanding laws and regulations, certifications, bidding procedures and specifications. Three months after the tornado hit, the PTAC has been given direct credit from businesses winning more than \$51 million in federal contracts for recovery efforts. After the tornado, the PTAC wanted to ensure federal agencies were aware of the PTAC in Joplin and its eagerness to assist in locating and educating local businesses and assessing immediate needs.

Lion Tales

In the days and weeks that followed the tornado, many people talked about all of the stories that were told. We asked alumni, employees and students to share their memories, either in first person or through an interview. These are their stories.



Chris and Melissa Carriger and Ashes stand on the lot where their house was located before the tornado. — Photo by Andrew Pavlovic, '11

Chris Carriger, Jasper County Sheriff's Department detective and a graduate student at Missouri Southern, said being in the midst of devastation is not something new. As a member of the Missouri Army National Guard's 1138th Military Police Company, he has done everything from four tours of duty in Iraq to helping with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina that devastated New Orleans in 2005. His training has helped him carry out his duties, but nothing prepared him for the destruction of the May 22 tornado. Not only did he have to help his community, he and his wife had to deal with their own personal loss.

Carriger and his K-9 partner, Ashes, were at their house located west of St. John's when the tornado struck their home.

"The hardest thing for me to deal with has been the loss of so much of my history due to the storm," said Carriger, who lost his home in the tornado. "I lost all of my college books that I saved for referencing, military awards and coins, as well as photos of my life growing up and my children as well."

After Carriger made his way out of the rubble of what was his home, he immediately started getting to work. He used his training to help assist those in the community.

"Without that background, I might not have been able to adhere to the three C's of any emergency situation. Those three C's that we as law enforcement professionals must try to adhere to are calm, cool and collected," said Carriger.

Carriger is in the final year of his master's degree program in criminal justice administration and plans to graduate this fall. His wife, Melissa, also attends Southern and just began the nursing program. With numerous donations and help from family, friends and organiza-

tions, the couple has been able to replace vehicles, clothing and items needed for school.

"The one thing that I am most proud of during this experience and that will stick with me forever is the American spirit. The fact that so many people put their lives on hold to come to Joplin and help as well as raise money to send to Joplin was so amazing," Carriger said.

He and his wife are living in a recreational camper south of Joplin, with hopes of purchasing their first home in the near future. Recently, Carriger was hired by Southern's law enforcement academy as an instructor. He would like to be an adjunct professor in the criminal justice department once his degree is complete.

Carriger hopes the public has learned to be more tolerant of others and not take the little things in life for granted.

"I hope that through all the heartaches, backaches, headaches and misery we can learn to enjoy life when we can," he said.



Aaron Johnson, '05, (third from right) with volunteers who drove from Arizona. — Submitted photo

Aaron Johnson, a Grand Canyon University enrollment counselor and 2005 Missouri Southern graduate, was shocked by the tornado on May 22. He spent that Sunday evening on his phone and Facebook, waiting for updates on family and friends and praying for their safety.

By Monday morning, he was too distracted to work at his office in Phoenix. Unable to focus and almost numb from shock, he began thinking of ways to help Joplin. The first step was to contact José Mereno, GCU's community outreach leader, with the news and present some possibilities. Mereno was pleased with Johnson's ideas, and the plans quickly grew with GCU's backing and suggestions to "do it bigger and better."

Plans were made to adopt families and take donations of essential items and clothing these families needed. News of the tornado and lists of items needed were broadcast throughout the school, and the news spread quickly through the city. The Phoenix Suns had also heard about the tornado and Johnson's fundraiser and decided to help.

Within four days, Johnson, Mereno and fellow GCU employee Jennifer Willis had loaded a van and U-Haul trailer with donations and headed for Joplin. The extra donations they had were picked up by another donation truck and

taken to Joplin to be dispersed as they were needed.

"It was very surreal," Johnson said of the three days they spent in Joplin.

They delivered items to families and visited Johnson's parents, hearing each of their horror stories.

"The hardest part was standing on the hill at Duquesne and 20th Street," Johnson said. "I could see all the way across town to St. John's, and that was when it hit me."

Despite the devastation, Johnson was pleased to see all the support from GCU, the students and strangers he met on the trip to Joplin. There were even extra donations to send after he returned home.

Johnson has not let GCU forget about Joplin. He submits daily internal updates throughout campus about Joplin's progress during the clean up and rebuilding process as well as news on the adopted families. He wants to keep Joplin close to their hearts and give the people they helped a face to go with their story. Not only has MSSU been a headquarters for assistance through this tragedy, it has also produced alumni with a sense of community and a big heart, no matter how many miles away.



Teara, '09, and Mark Neidert. — Submitted photo

Teara Neidert, '09, secretary for MSSU First Year Experience, and her husband, Mark, were married on May 23, 2009. Their second anniversary this year was going to be a special one. Mark is in the U.S. Army, so they were unable to have a real honeymoon, and their first-year anniversary was hampered by Mark's deployment in Afghanistan.

On May 22, 2011, Teara and Mark were preparing for their much-awaited get away and decided to go to the store for some last-minute supplies.

"All we needed were some travel soap and shampoo, so we went to Walmart," said Teara. "I wish we would've gone to Target — it's closer to our house — we should've gone to Target."

The couple arrived at the 15th Street Walmart moments before the EF-5 tornado hit.

"There's really just no way to put the feeling into words," Teara said. "It was one of the strangest and most frightening experiences I have ever been through."

Before the couple had a chance to realize what was happening, the roof flew off of the building and the inner wall beside them disappeared. Teara closed her eyes.

"At that point it was all I could think to do while keeping a tight grasp to my husband," she said. "It then felt like forever for it to stop, although I know it was probably less than a few minutes until it was over."

The couple made it out with minor injuries and spent the next several hours helping others get out of the debris. The couple eventually found their totaled truck and drove what was left of it to their home in Joplin.



Jocelyn Brisson, senior sociology major, holds a picture of her good friend Vicki Robertson, who died from tornado-related injuries. — Photo by Aaron DuRall, '11

Jocelyn Brisson, senior sociology major, and her friend Mike Ori went to check on Brisson's good friend Vicki Robertson, who was like a mother to her. Brisson sent in her story about their search for her "Ma" right after the storm struck: I didn't get a call like usual when the weather is crazy. We went up 15th Street, turned on Kansas Avenue and got to Parr Hill Park, and devastation struck us. We jumped out of the car and ran to where my ma's house once stood.

People were screaming that there was someone alive over here, and I just knew it was her. Mike and I ran to her. He covered her up with his leather coat, and I squatted and talked to her. After digging her out a little, we had some people take the tailgate off their truck for a makeshift stretcher. Ma was hurt, coherent and said she had a compound fractured leg and a broken arm, plus she was cold. I knew she had a head injury, as I could feel her hair matted with blood. Once we got her into the back of another amazing stranger's pickup truck, Mike and I jumped in — him holding her in place and me listening to her tell me her whole life story on the way to the hospital. In and out we went

through traffic. At one point she yelled at me and said, "Jocelyn are you listening to me?" I replied, "Yes, Ma, I'm listening." She continued with her life story, and we got her on a gurney at Freeman. People were everywhere. They had her in the hallway and wouldn't let me stay with her. Mike and I wrote our names and numbers on her arm with a Sharpie marker and regretfully left.

Mike, an amazing friend, kept me busy with the Red Cross until 4 a.m. at the MSSU campus. It kept my mind from worrying. It was difficult trying to find out how Ma was with the phones down. After about two days and a lot of transferring me to other people at Freeman, I finally got a nurse to tell me something. They told me there was a lady named Vicki that didn't make it and had writing on her arm and to go to the morgue to ID the body. The last thing Ma said to me during her tale of her life story was this, "Jocelyn, you're the only Jocelyn I got. It's important you remember this: You and God together can handle anything!" I miss you Ma!



Brenda Blalock, '04, sits on the storm shelter where she and her family rode out the tornado. — Photo by Kenna Peters, '11

Brenda Blalock, '04, financial aid counselor, finds that the experience of the May 22 tornado has brought her family even closer. With the storm approaching, Blalock went to her daughter's house at 24th Street and Missouri Avenue. Her daughter had insisted her mother come over because it looked like the storm was going to hit on the north side of town, where Blalock lives. And, her daughter had a storm cellar.

Once the family realized the storm was coming, they rushed to the cellar.

"My daughter, she immediately plugged in earphones because she had a little radio. I think I heard it first, and I looked at my son-in-law and I said, 'Did you hear that?' He looked at me and asked, 'What do you think it is,' and I said, 'I think it's coming,'" Blalock said.

"And when it hit, yeah, I mean your ears are popping and it's so loud and ... it ripped off the air vents off of the cellar and was shooting debris down on us on our heads. We had been charcoaling chicken breasts and it picked up the grill and was shooting flaming briquettes down inside the cellar, so we got the grandkids down

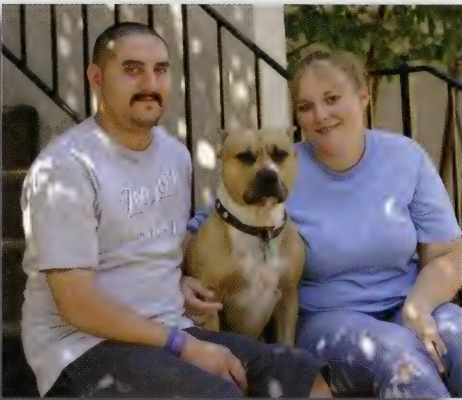
underneath the bench until it was over. It's kind of surreal. My son-in-law opened the cellar door, and he said, 'It's gone.' And I said, 'Jake, you mean your house is gone?' And he said, 'Brenda, the entire neighborhood is gone.'"

They decided it was best to take the kids away from the scene.

"Several years ago when the storm hit Carl Junction I told my daughter, 'We need to get a storm shelter for my grandbabies,'" Blalock said.

The family didn't have the money, so Blalock called her dad and asked for help. He paid to have a storm shelter put in at her daughter's house, which is the shelter the family was in during the storm.

"He saved us," Blalock said.



Chris Quinonez and Ashley Alexander, senior accounting major, sit on the steps of their new home with their dog, Priest. — Photo by Rhonda Clark, '00

Ashley Alexander, senior accounting major, was home with her boyfriend and dog when the tornado hit their neighborhood at 22nd Street and Grand Avenue, about two blocks west of the high school.

Alexander recalled the events of that night: We hid in a closet that was toward the back of the house by the bathroom, and luckily, the bathroom and that closet were the only places in the house that didn't get torn up really bad. We were very fortunate to still be alive. There was a tree that fell in our backyard and you notice when looking at the tree that there is a ton of debris, including at least four Allied Waste garbage cans. If that tree would have fallen any other way then it would have either fallen on our house on top of us or it wouldn't have blocked the debris that it stopped. If that tree hadn't blocked that debris, then the house for sure would have collapsed. That is why I feel we were very lucky.

My life has changed dramatically, but it is finally getting back to normal. The house we were renting in Joplin is the first house we moved to when we moved to Joplin in 2007, and we had lived there ever since. We both still have our jobs because we work outside of town. We were fortunate enough to have family to stay with for about four months while we found another place to rent or buy. We tried to stay positive through this new journey that got thrown at us. There were absolutely no places to rent, so we just recently bought our first home.

We were also very fortunate to find this house because it was within our price range (about the same price as our rent with insurance and taxes), and we love it! It is a feeling that is indescribable to finally have a place of our own again. To some people, this may just be a part of life to move and find a new place to live. However, finding a new home took on a whole new meaning for us. It meant the world when we finally closed on the house. We are finally getting settled in and back to our normal schedule.

I honestly believe that Joplin will grow back stronger than ever, and I feel that this devastating occurrence has brought the people of Joplin together and has really shown Joplin's true colors. I was amazed at the generosity of all the people willing to help. I have talked to many people who have worked other disaster sites, and they have told me that the attitude of the Joplin citizens is nothing like anywhere else they have seen. Joplin is just so full of life and has amazingly giving citizens. I just want to say thank you to all the volunteers and all the people who donated to Joplin. I was lucky enough to have family and friends that I could turn to, so I was fine after the tornado.

However, many people had nobody and nothing after the tornado. That is why I was just amazed at all the generosity and donations that were sent to Joplin. They really helped so many people that really needed it. I love Joplin and am proud to be a citizen.



Cindi and Richard Miller helped out with triage at the Health Sciences Building after surviving the tornado that destroyed their home. — Photo by Kenna Peters, '11

Richard Miller, dean of the school of arts and sciences, says the May 22 tornado changed his life: both in terms of physical possessions and overall outlook.

"We were like so many other people. We did the dumb thing. We heard the sirens go off 20 minutes before it hit, but you know it was one of those, yep there's the sirens," Miller said. "You know, I've lived my life here and I've never — I mean, I've seen tornadoes — but I've never been in a tornado.

"My youngest daughter had just arrived at our house and my oldest stepdaughter was already there. I walked out and I thought wow, listen to this thunder. Then I thought wow, that's not stopping. My wife was standing there and we looked at each other and we both said, 'It's a tornado.' We ran down the hallway, and we only have one interior room and it's a closet. Everything else was on an exterior wall, and the four of us got in there with our two dogs because they weren't about to go anywhere without us. Just as I closed the door, we suddenly heard the house ripped apart."

After the storm, the family was shocked by the destruction around them.

"We didn't know where to go or what to do," said Miller. "I think at first you're just idle. I literally think it's a state of shock."

Miller and his wife, Cindi, a nurse at St. John's Regional Medical Center, were without any usable vehicles, so they couldn't go anywhere. A friend from Webb City came to check on the Millers and took them north. The Millers knew Missouri Southern would open as a shelter and temporary medical facility, so they headed to the campus.

"When we got there, she went to the Health Sciences Building and I went over to Leggett and there were already quite a few people there taking everything down from the previous day, or that day actually, the high school graduation," Miller said.

The Millers spent several hours helping others at Southern's campus that night, but they didn't let the work stop there. They returned the next morning and worked another eight hours before they realized they needed to start thinking about where they were going to live.

"We realized we couldn't stay out here forever doing this, so that's when we pulled out and said OK, now we've got to figure out where we're going," he said.

The Millers eventually found a place in Webb City.

"Oddly enough, a nurse that my wife worked for had resigned at St. John's and was living in Tulsa but didn't know what she was going to do with her house, so we called her and asked is it available, and she said yes. So three weeks later, it became available to rent," said Miller.

Since the tornado, Miller has a more positive outlook on life.

"You really do learn to value what's right here, right now. You learn to value each other a lot more. You don't take each other for granted. We find we're a whole lot more patient," said Miller.



Niki Corcoran, '11, and her son, Kylan, sit on a downed tree near the swimming pool that was littered with debris after the storm. — Photo by Willie Brown, '13

Niki Corcoran, '11, who graduated from Southern on May 21, sent in her story about how her friends and family were celebrating her big feat: I had invited everyone I knew to come to a pool party at my house. In the early afternoon, I felt frustrated that so many friends who said they were coming were not showing up. A few text messages confirmed they heard a storm was coming. I knew that storms were threatening to ruin my party all week, but the sun was shining, the kids were swimming and a band was playing in my backyard. We watched the sky as the clouds began to take over and lightning cut off swimming.

The kids got into dry clothes and the band packed up their gear and headed out to another gig. The people in my home continued to enjoy food and drinks. Then, the sky turned dark and the power went out. I went outside to notify the folks on the deck, and they were all staring straight up into the sky. As we moved inside, I stopped to shut the gates to the pool, but as I struggled to move it, something told me I didn't have time to mess with it.

Inside, everybody was in motion heading to the basement, with the exception of three guests who seemed oblivious to what was going on as they remained around the bar in my den. I yelled at them and forced them to look at me to see the gravity of the situation. It just so happened we had candles burning on the bar, so I ordered them to each grab one and head to the basement.

A collective group of 25 people found shelter in our basement. Some were scared, others were not sure what to think. One adult decided to go back up to get something and reported that a window had broken in the den. My dad went up and saw the trees were down. We started to emerge one by one, not sure of whether or not it had passed us. Since we never really heard anything, we weren't sure what to do. We found all our trees down, all our patio furniture in the pool, along with our fence and a tree. Our roof appeared to have no damage. The upstairs porch had all its

furniture tossed to one side and broken glass was all over, but no one knew where the glass had come from since the windows were only screens. A few people wandered up the hill; I stayed to watch the children. When they came back, they had terror in their eyes. Mom and Dad took off to get Dad to work at Freeman Health System, and Mom went to let my grandma know we were OK. My mother didn't realize until later that she was going to rescue her mother and stepfather from their home.

It was a strange turn of events. I lost my job at Macdoodles but found an internship at Freeman in the marketing department. I teamed up with the media coordinator and fulfilled my desire for news. Our family was the only one to stay in the neighborhood for the first couple of weeks. We had some roof damage but not enough to force us out, and since we already had a contractor in contact for previous remodeling, we fixed it fairly quickly. My grandmother moved in with us, which has been a great help for me, having her there to help with my kids.

My papa broke his knee in a fall when he was trying to leave his home. He was placed in a care home by the VA, then moved to a hospital for treatment where they diagnosed him with dementia. In the following weeks, they discovered internal bleeding and determined he would not make it through surgery. He died on July 7. As of yet, he has not been counted in the fatality list.

In a way, my life has not changed as far as still living in my home. Having four generations in one home can be stressful and frustrating at times, but I remind myself that it won't be forever, and that we are very blessed to have what we have. It'll be much longer than planned before I move out of my parents' house. It took weeks to get Internet or cable back, so I was without my vices for a long time. I started saving newspapers, and I'm making a scrapbook. It's going to be a very big scrapbook, and that has been my therapy.



Janna, Jackilyn and J.J., '90, Spurlin at their Joplin, Missouri, home. — Photo by Kenna Peters, '11

J.J. Spurlin, '90, associate professor of criminal justice, was watching TV with his 10-year-old son, Joe, while his daughter Jackilyn, 2, napped. His wife, Janna, a graduate of the Missouri Southern nursing program, was at work as an ICU nurse at St. John's Regional Medical Center. When the sirens went off, J.J., his children and some neighbors took shelter in the basement of the Spurlin home near the MSSU campus. Living in southwest Missouri, Spurlin wasn't too concerned; the sirens go off all the time.

At 5:54 p.m., Spurlin received a voicemail. He thought he had missed the call because he was in the basement, so he went back upstairs to retrieve the message he will never forget.

"There were nurses screaming in the background," Spurlin said of the voice message from his wife. "She said, 'Tell the kids I love them.' Then the line went dead."

Spurlin took his children to the neighbor's house and, with another neighbor, went to look for his wife.

"It only took about 20 minutes to get across town," he said.

They were able to get to 21st Street and Annie Baxter Avenue before parking and walking the rest of the way.

"There was a stream of people going toward the hospital," Spurlin said. "We just followed them."

Downed electric lines and debris made travel dangerous, but they finally reached the hospital, where the scene was like something out of the movies. First responders, firefighters, hospital employees and private citizens joined forces to evacuate the hospital. In trying to reach his wife, Spurlin and his neighbor became rescuers. For the next two hours, they worked to move survivors off the third floor of the devastated hospital. But there was no sign of his wife.

And then, another moment of devastation: A firefighter came down the steps and announced they had switched gears. No more survivors were in that area of the hospital.

"I thought she was dead," Spurlin said. It was one of worst moments of his life.

Instead of returning home, Spurlin headed to the Brady Building, where more rescues were taking place. He also found his wife, who had not been injured in the tornado.

The reunion was interrupted with another call. The home the couple owned at 17th Street and Range Line Road, occupied by Spurlin's brother, had taken a direct hit. He was home when the tornado struck and had taken cover in the bathroom. He, too, escaped injury.

The Spurlins were lucky.

"I was able to come home that night," said Janna. "My house was still there. My family was safe."

It took several days to locate her car. It was so badly damaged the vehicle identification numbers were gone. It was identified only when they found the insurance card and her Bible in the glove box.

As they watched 2-year-old Jackilyn play in the family's home, the couple agreed on one thing: The tornado has made them appreciate every day even more.



Raye and Fred, '75, Frerer stand in the doorway of what's left of the bathroom where they took shelter from the tornado.

— Submitted photo

Raye Frerer, special education instructor at Emerson Elementary, was in the bathroom with her husband, Fred, '75, sitting and listening to the weather report from another room, when the bombs of the storm hit. Frerer sent in their story and some information about her family: Thankfully, it was the one time that my husband had come into the house during the blare of tornado warning sirens (Like many men, he enjoys watching the approaching storms from the street in front of the house).

There are many stories I could tell, but my favorite is that in the eye of the storm, Jesus heard our cry and healed my husband's heart. He had been diagnosed with severe cardiomyopathy in January and the day after the storm he was just ... different. Before the storm, he would often stand up to get a drink of water, sit down and immediately fall asleep after taking a few swallows. The day after the storm, I chided him for spending a long time tossing 2x4s and great amounts of debris. When he went to the cardiologist on July 5, he was told that his heart looked "perfectly normal" and "much better than I could have expected" by his physician! Never have I been so thrilled to hear I was wrong!

Since the storm, I have nothing to worry about. Literally ... no house, no car, no truck, no things. Would I trade them for what I received? In a New York minute! Seeing my man smile with good color on his face is worth more than any four walls in the world! The school where I teach was damaged, and I am also trying to move my classroom as well. My husband and I are still looking for a permanent home, car and working on putting the pieces of his old truck together, and it has been a long, hot summer, but I am blessed. Caring people from around the country and right next door have stepped up to bless my classroom in ways I would have never understood or expected.

Now, if I could just find a '10 Accord with heated leather seats for my aching back this winter.

Frerer graduated in 1976 from Southwest Baptist University with a bachelor's in elementary education. She attended MSSC in 1975 during the summer term, where she met the love of her life, Fred Frerer, '75. It was such a pleasant experience that they married, moved to Duquesne and subsequently sent all three of their daughters to MSSU. She is two hours away from finishing a TESOL certification from MSSU and teaches K-3rd grade special education at Emerson Elementary, which was moved to Duquesne Elementary this fall due to the storm.



Chelsea Jones, MSSU Alumni Association student employee. — Photo by Rhonda Clark, '00

Chelsea Jones, senior communication major, was home watching a movie when the storm hit. This is her story: My dad called me from Branson and was like, "Are you watching the weather?" So at that point I'd heard on the radio, I guess we had some weather coming, but all I heard was that it might hit Webb City, which is where a good friend of mine lives. She called me and said, "Hey can I come over to your house because I'm getting a little freaked out here," and I was like, "Yeah, sure." She actually saw the tornado as she was driving down Range Line to get to my house. Thank goodness she was OK. But right when she turned down our street, she said she couldn't see in front of her to drive. She was two houses away from me and couldn't get to our house, and she's calling me, and I guess there was a flash of lightning or something, and she made it. My boyfriend ran out and grabbed her, and we all went to my closet.

I've never been so scared in my entire life than hearing that pass over. They say it sounds like a train. It's just a really scary experience to live through. I just remember coming out my front door and crying.

It's a struggle to accept this every time I see the damage, but it's really made people reassess and remember what's important in life and come together and be together for each other.



Brian Selvidge. — Photo by Aaron DuRall, '11

Bryan Selvidge, senior criminal justice major, and president of the MoSo Mane-iacs, an athletic spirit group, shared his story of May 22: I was in Webb City Walmart when the tornado struck. The storm affected me by shattering windows and knocking a door in at a house I was potentially going to live in this fall. Now I am having to go ahead and move back on campus.

Since the May 22 tornado, I will no longer take storm warnings lightly, and also I realized that there is still some good in people. I was amazed at how many have already, are currently, or plan to help those affected in Joplin. It really shows you the patriotism of our country and that God is still at work in the midst of times of hardship and despair.

— Stories compiled by Lakin Adams, '12; Kisa Clark, '11; Rhonda Clark, '00; Kenna Peters, '11; Joanna Lee, '12; and Ashley Linebarger, '12.

In Remembrance

On May 22, 2011, and in the days that followed, the Joplin, Missouri, area lost 161 people, as of November 11, 2011, from injuries related to the tornado. We want to remember those who died. The names of individuals who had a Missouri Southern connection are in bold print. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of these amazing people.

José O. Alvarez, Faculty

Maria L. Alvarez-Torres

Barbara A. Anderson, Friend

Sarah L. Anderson

William A. Anderson

Grace Aquino

Dale Arsenault

Cyrus "Edward" Ash Jr.

Bruce M. Baillie

Robert W. Baker

Robert E. Bateson

Dorothy T. Bell

Regina M. Bloxham

Barbara Boyd

Lathe E. Bradfield

Burnice M. Bresee

Ramona M. Bridgeford

Leo E. Brown

Hugh O. Buttram

Tami L. Campbell

Arriyinnah S. Carmona

Moises Carmona-Navarro

Shante M. Caton

Trenton Caton

Raymond L. Chew

Clyde Coleman

Carolane J. Collins

Lois A. Comfort

Keenan K. Conger

James V. "Jim" Cookerly

Edmon A. Cooper

Vicki L. Cooper

Alice L. Hudson Cope

Teddy R. Copher

Malisa A. Crossley

Adam D. Darnaby

Patricia "Pat" E. Dawson

Michael Dennis

Nancy E. Douthitt

Ellen J. Doyle

Faith C. Dunn

Amonda Sue Eastwood

Richard A. Elmore

Randy E. England

Mark L. Farmer

Ida M. Finley

Betty J. B. Fisher

Robert S. Fitzgerald

Rick E. Fox

Marsha Ann Frost, Friend

Sebastian C. Frost

Charles K. Gaudsmith

Billie J. Gideon

Robert Griffin

Paul E. Haddock

Johnna Hale

Leola L. Hardin, Friend

Caley Lantz Hare

Dorothy V. Hartman

Dee A. Hayward

Judy Head

Glenn W. Holland, '72

Lorie M. Holland

Ronnie D. Holloway

Charlotte Hopwood

Harli Howard

Hayze Howard

Thomas Russell Howard

Billie Sue Huff Little

Iona Hull

Wendy A. Istas

Jane E. Jaynes

Cyrena Mae Starr Johnson, Friend

Melissa R. Johnson

Dorothy M. Johnston

Cheryl L. Jones

Kathy S. Keling

James David Kendrick

Abraham Khoury, Student

Stanley D. Kirk

Geneva Koler

Tedra J. Kuhn

Donald W. Lansaw Jr., Friend

Bruce A. Lievens, Friend

Skyular I. Logsdon

Christopher D. Lucas

Patricia Mann

Rachel K. Markham, Friend

Nancy Martin

Janice McKee

Jesse L. McKee, Friend

James E. McKeel

Mary L. McKeel

LaDonna S. McPurdy

Randall Elvin Mell, Friend

Angelina Ann Menapace, Friend

Ronald D. Meyer

Lorna K. Miller

Ray Donald Miller III

Suzanne M. Mock

Doris Marie Menhusen Montgomery

Edith L. Moore

Estrelita Moore

Sally Moulton

Georgia "Nadine" Mulkey

Edmund Vincent Mullaney

Sharyl Nelson

William R. Norton

Dennis M. Osborn

Charles E. Oster, Friend

Shirley Ann Parker

Nichole Sherie Pearish

Mary J. Perry

James B. Peterson

Anna Pettek

John H. Petty Jr.

Hallie M. Piquard

Natalia M. Puebla, Friend

Shelly Marie Ramsey, Friend

Lorretta Lea Randall, '81

Troy Raney

Cheryl Rantz

Darlene K. Ray

Virgil T. Reid

Johnnie R. Richey

Cayla Ann Selsor Robinson

Vicki Robertson

Keith D. Robinson

Margaret Row

Virginia M. Salmon

Thomas Sarino

Tonya L. Sawyer

Frances A. Scates

Gladys J. Seay

Daniel W. Shirley

Gene Smith

Judy Lee Smith, Friend

Luther Smith

Nicholaus A. Smith

Shyrell L. Smith

Lois L. Sparks

Steven J. Haack Stephens

Betty Stogsdill, Friend

Ralph Gilbert Stover

Gregan D. Sweet

Jefferson Taylor, '01

Kayleigh Teal

Heather L. Terry

John Thomas Jr.

Sandra K. Thomas

Zachary D. Treadwell

Margaret Tuit

Michael E. Tyndall

Darian "Dee" Vanderhoofven

Joshua D. Vanderhoofven

Miguel Vazquez-Castillo

Miles Dean Wells, Friend

Tiera Whitley

Douglas Williams

Zachary Allen Williams,

Legacy Day Participant

Charles W. Writer



Dr. José Alvarez was known for a couple of things — his love of teaching and music. He was able to combine the two to bring a unique aspect to his classroom.

"He was the only professor who used music to encourage language and learning," said Dr. Sherman X. Hou, department head of foreign languages. "He sang songs with them in Spanish and made sure that he was able to talk to them one on one; he got involved and made it fun, interesting."

Alvarez taught Spanish and composition at Missouri Southern and was loved by faculty and students alike.

Alvarez was 59 when he died after being injured by the May 22 tornado. It would take seven days after the storm before friends and family found out that Alvarez had died on May 22, 2011. Many people helped search for him that week.

"He was my friend; he loved his teaching and his students loved him," said Beatrice Dubois, professor of foreign languages.

Alvarez taught as an assistant professor for five years at Southern and was always looking for new ways to inspire students. He also wanted to help expand programs.

"Whenever the department faced a financial crisis, he went directly to Dr. Speck to propose his idea of a global university, to help the university and department," Hou said. "He really cared about the program growth and wanted to be involved."

Alvarez received his bachelor's degree in anthropology from Universidad Nacional de Columbia and master's and doctoral degrees at Florida International University in Miami, Florida.

Alvarez is survived by his wife, Linda Alvarez of Joplin; the mother of his children, Gloria Alvarez, of Miami, Florida; and three children Alex, Sebastian and Julian.

of his life, attended Joplin public schools and graduated from Joplin High School in 2004.

He was pursuing his degree in business and entrepreneurship at Missouri Southern State University. He also worked as a server at Outback Steakhouse in Joplin. Abe was a Christian, who loved fishing, camping and the outdoors.

He also loved to play Texas Hold'em and aspired to play professionally. He played high school football and was a passionate Kansas City Chiefs fan.

Survivors include his mother, Teresa Worley, Joplin; his father, John Khoury, Gallatin, Tennessee; three brothers, Frank Carey and Nicholas and Michael Khoury; a sister, Samantha Khoury; and a stepbrother, Zach Worley.



Don Lansaw, taken suddenly, was the husband of Bethany Lansaw, an employee in the talent search office at Missouri Southern State University.

Don and Bethany were at home when the tornado struck Joplin. Seeking shelter in the bathtub, Don used his body to shield his wife.

"Don did everything he could to keep me safe," said Bethany. "He refused to let the tornado take me."

After realizing her husband was hurt, Bethany ran to find an ambulance.

"I just knew I had to get my husband help and fast," said Bethany.

While Bethany was looking for help, family friends came over to find Don and Bethany. While searching for Bethany, they found the Lansaws' dog, Whisper, and took him to Bethany.

"We have been our own little family and miss Don so very much," said Bethany.

Don, 31, was full of love and adored by friends and family. He owned Lansaw Technologies and was a licensed Realtor with Charles Burt.

A former football player, Don had the size and strength to protect his wife.

"He was my strong, linebacker-sized husband," said Bethany. "He had so much love in his heart, and I know he wouldn't have wanted it any other way."

He is survived by his wife as well as his

parents, Donald Wayne Lansaw Sr., Joplin, and Beth Lansaw, Seneca; brother, Zach Lansaw, Joplin; grandmother, Mary Sargent, Carl Junction; and father- and mother-in-law, Jim and Donna Krudwig, Webb City.



Jeff Taylor, '01, will be remembered not only for his service but also for the smile he wore.

"He was always willing to help and would give the shirt off

of his back," said Holly Phillips, assistant to chief of police for the Riverside Police Department in Riverside, Missouri.

Taylor, an alumnus of Missouri Southern, was 31 when he died June 3, 2011, due to injuries sustained after lightning struck the ground near him on May 23. Taylor volunteered to be one of 12 individuals to come to Joplin to help with the aftermath of the May 22 tornado.

He was the first officer to die in the line of duty of the Riverside Police Department. Taylor was added to the Joplin Police Department's Wall of Honor, made up of 20 police officers and firefighters.

"We felt he died in service of citizens of Joplin, and because of that, we felt it right to add him to the wall," said Joplin Chief of Police Lane Roberts.

Taylor was said to be a "highly dedicated officer and devoted public servant" and was named Officer of the Year in 2008. He worked at the Webb City Police Department before moving to Riverside in 2005.

"He was an excellent officer, proactive, didn't need much guidance," said Webb City Assistant Police Chief Don Melton. "Jeff had the blue flame, but he had control of it."

Melton, who graduated from Southern in 1995, remained close to Taylor after he left the Webb City Police Department. Melton said the addition of Taylor to Joplin's Wall of Honor was a wonderful gesture by the city of Joplin. The city also named one of the temporary FEMA housing parks after Taylor, the Officer Jeff Taylor Memorial Park, located just south of the Joplin Regional Airport.

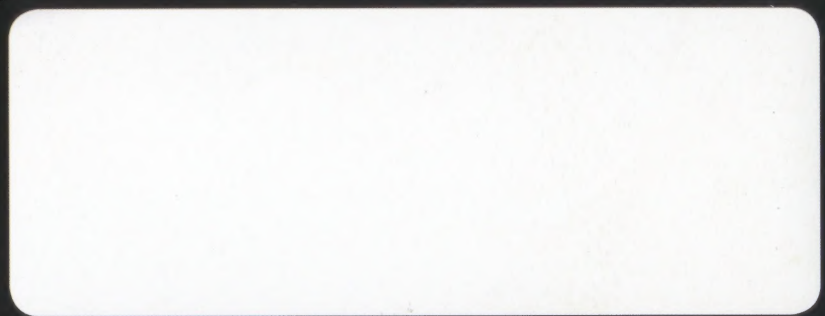
Taylor is survived by his wife, Kelly, and two sons, Caden, 3, and Cameron, 5.

— By Lakin Adams, '12, and Ashley Linebarger, '12



Abraham H. (Abe) Khoury, 26, of Joplin, Missouri, died May 31, 2011, at University Hospital in Columbia from injuries sustained in the Joplin

tornado. Born December 7, 1984, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, he lived in Joplin most



"José, Abe and Donald did not die in vain."
— Dr. Bruce Speck, University President



The Missouri Southern family lost three individuals after the May 22 tornado: Dr. José Alvarez, a respected faculty member; Abraham "Abe" Khoury, a student who was a role model to his friends and family; and Don Lansaw, who gave his life shielding his wife Bethany, a staff member.

In honor of these three individuals, Dr. and Mrs. Bruce Speck established the Alvarez-Khoury-Lansaw Memorial Scholarship.

For information about contributing to this endowed scholarship, please contact Michael Fontana, Development Officer, at the Missouri Southern Foundation, 417-659-4436 or send an email to fontana-m@mssu.edu.